

Buchman is our man for president

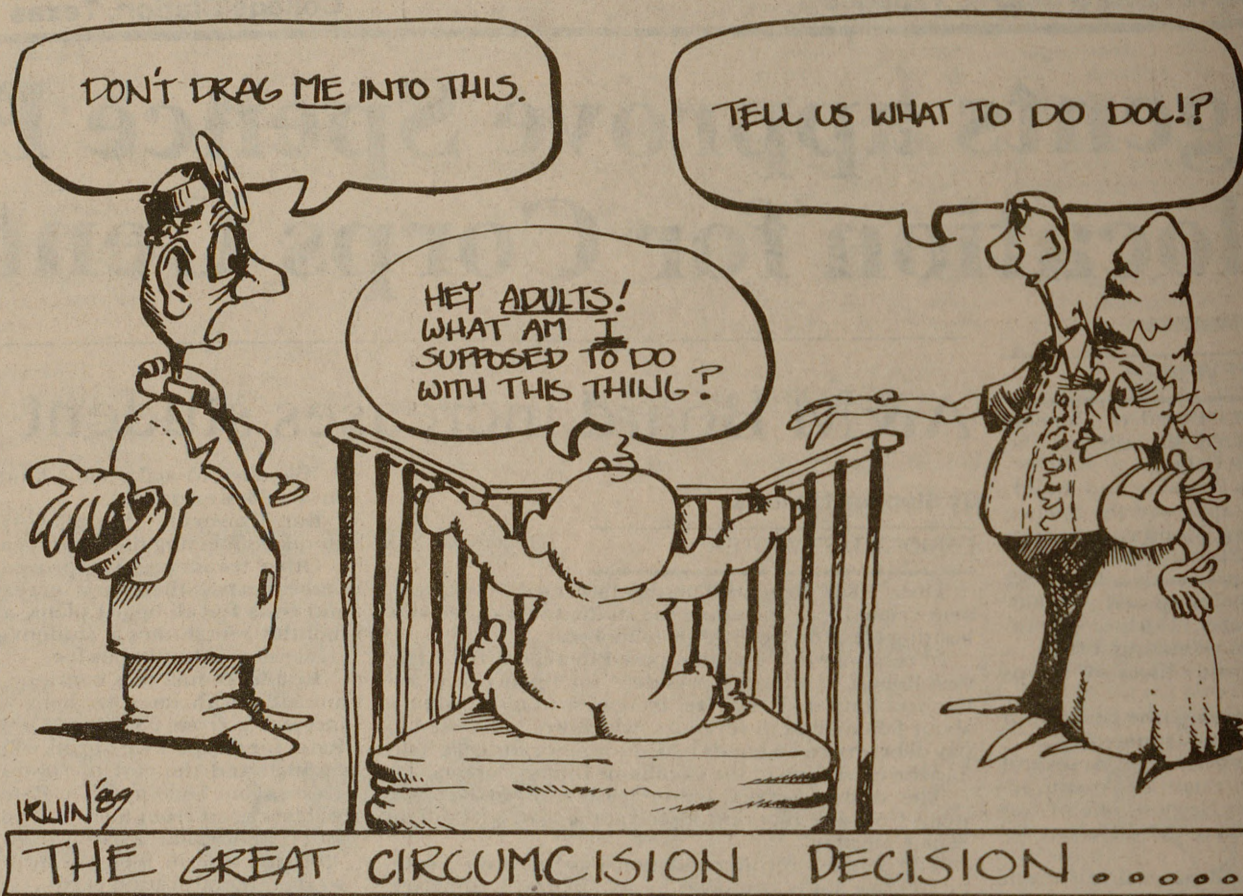
After interviewing both candidates for student body president, *The Battalion* is endorsing Kevin Buchman.

We were impressed greatly by both candidates' knowledge of student government and their plans for next year. However, after much discussion, the editorial board decided that Buchman had a better sense of the issues affecting students and a more practical set of goals.

We agree with Buchman's priorities — mainly his plans to work on teacher evaluations, books for the library, a truly "dead" dead week and a lobby against a tax on student financial aid.

Though these are some of the main topics of the campaign and were brought up by both candidates, we thought Buchman, the speaker of the Student Senate, had more substantial and realistic plans to deal with these issues.

The Battalion Editorial Board



IRWIN'S
THE GREAT CIRCUMCISION DECISION.....

No long lines, no jury duty: Why not vote?



Timm Doolen
Columnist

Each year a minority of students chooses the next year's student body president, yell leaders, class councils, senators, etc. What happens during these elections blows under the noses of too many A&M students.

This year we are provided with a unique election experience: Michael Kelley, a cadet, is running against Kevin Buchman, a non-reg who is also a fraternity member. But neither person is running as a representative of the organization in which he is involved. In fact, Michael Kelley says he is running as "Michael Kelley," not "Cadet Michael Kelley."

That's a good attitude at a time when we try to define people by labels. Still, rumors abound that the fraternities are going to block vote, and the Corps has a long history of voting for cadets.

Block voting is not necessarily wrong, but the reasoning that constitutes a block vote is suspect. I think people should vote for the person they believe will do the best job, or for someone with whom they share some common bond. For many fraternity members or cadets, they share a bond, albeit distant, with Kevin Buchman or Michael Kelley.

Being loosely connected in the same group with a candidate seems a fair enough reason to vote for that person. In national and state politics, the majority of us vote for a candidate because of his or her party affiliation, which could be considered a looser affiliation than the candidate being a fraternity brother or a Corps buddy.

Block voting, if it is incidental, is not inherently wrong and neither is voting for someone because they share a certain kinship with the voter. In other words, if a block vote is a result of a mass of related people (for instance, the Corps) voting for the candidate with whom they share a bond, then that's fine.

Unfortunately this is not how block votes occur — they usually are artificially created. In most cases a block vote is instigated by suggestions of superiors and helped along by peer pressure.

A former cadet told me that a few days before the election, the squad is assembled and the squad commander goes through the list of candidates, mentioning those who are cadets.

I think that's ethically questionable. When an authority figure suggests which candidates a subordinate should vote for, it inhibits the freedom of choice of the voter. Even though the superiors don't directly tell the subordinate to vote for "candidate X," merely suggesting a candidate is a suppression of the freedom of the voter, because the suggestion comes from a person of direct authority.

It's as if your employer, or somebody you looked up to, told you who he thought a good candidate in an upcoming election is. In the Corps this suggestion goes much further, because an employer doesn't have the direct physical control over us that squad commanders have over their squadrons.

Corps leaders also urge cadets to vote on election day, and the Corps always has a high voter turnout. We can safely assume that an unusually high percentage of cadets vote for candidates who are also cadets. So with an assumed low turnout of non-Corps voters, Cadets are almost guaranteed spots in student government. Fair? Probably not. Should they be prohibited from block voting? No.

The solution is that more non-Corps students should vote so that our student government would more accurately represent the student body. In last year's election, less than 5,000 students voted, roughly 15% of the student body. That turnout is worse than state and national elections.

Last semester I defended people who didn't vote in the state and national elections. In tomorrow's school elections I'm urging students to vote.

Why? Voting in school elections involves short lines, no voter registration and no chance of jury duty.

Why not vote? With several hundred candidates seeking office, there's a high probability you know some people who are running. You can help them try to win, and every time you see the candidates you can say you voted for them.

Also, your vote means much more in these campus elections than in state or national elections. Some of the student senate constituencies number in the hundreds, and with only a small percentage of these people voting, your vote could be a deciding one. Last year, the presidency of the class of '90 was de-

termined by three votes (118-115). One vote (or a few) has a good possibility of determining the outcome of a student election.

Many people don't cast ballots because they believe the people they vote for hold useless jobs. The truth is that people in the position of student body president, RHA president, and OCA

perform an immensely valuable function as a sounding board to administrators. These three elected positions, especially student body president, have a lot of ability to directly affect the students.

There are many qualified individuals running for office this year, some in the Corps, some not. So vote for the people

of your choice, whether it's because you know them, a friend knows them, or you've heard good things about them. But please vote.

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

Panic caused by misinformation

Randy Lemmon
Guest Columnist

To say that our food supply is safe isn't newsworthy. But to say there is risk involved in eating hormone-treated meat or pesticide-treated apples... now there's a news story. Add to that a terrorist act with two cyanide-tainted grapes from Chile, and now the public is panicked about what they eat.

Fruits, vegetables and natural grains are treated with insecticides, fungicides and herbicides. Poultry, pork and beef are treated with antibiotics and growth-promoting hormones. Unfortunately, there have been persuasive news reports full of damaging innuendos that would lead us to believe that the American farmer and rancher is unnecessarily feeding us unhealthy goods. The fact is, all food is made up of chemicals. Treating it or touching it with other chemicals will not necessarily hurt anyone.

Some people have stopped eating red meat because of reports from an agriculturally naive media about the European ban on hormone-treated meat. What was ultimately a trade issue needlessly became a health issue. Hormone-free beef is a misnomer. Cattle themselves are producing their own hormones. Every day, human females produce more estrogen hormones in their bodies than what is ever implanted in a cow to help it produce leaner beef.

Mothers have poured apple juice and apple sauce down the drain for fear of cancer risks. These actions were spurred by a sensationalized report from the National Resource Defense Council, in which cancer risks were associated with pesticide residues. The tests they ran used extremely high levels of pesticides and growth regulators on apples.

What that report failed to tell anyone was that using that much pesticide on any one crop is financially unlikely. The fact is that the growth regulator in question, Daminozide, or trade name Alar, is used on maybe 5-10 percent of the apple crops in the United States.

It is amazing how two tainted grapes, a sensationalized and biased research report and a beef trade issue have terrified the American public about the safety of their food supply.

We have the safest and most abundant food supply anywhere in the world. And we obviously don't appreciate it.

We live with risk every day. So, why is it that we can be scared out of eating pesticide-treated fruit, but we freely go out and saturate our livers with alcohol, drive a two-ton vehicle at high speeds and think nothing of it? Most students at Texas A&M walk aimlessly across roads in heavy traffic — and that is a lot more risky.

Food is a very personal thing to most of us, and we think we understand it. Yet we obviously don't. We can't live our lives in a perfect environment, free from all problems. We have a pretty nice cushion here in the United States. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration have done an admirable job in making our food supply safe. It is an ongoing battle for these folks, and it's obviously a thankless job.

In less affluent societies, people face risks far worse than anything most Americans deal with on a daily basis, and not just with the food they eat. We are spoiled by the USDA and FDA and yet we lambast them for the recent scares concerning our food supply. We have this "better safe than sorry" mentality when it comes to food scares. We just expect everything we eat to be 100 percent safe. Well, that wish bears no relation to reality.

Here are some more facts. The European ban on hormone-treated meat exported from the United States was a

trade issue. Growth hormones improve an animal's ability to use nutrients to grow more muscle and less fat. In other words, this is how we get lean beef. The same or similar hormones occur naturally in the human body at levels thousands of times higher than the residues in meat from treated cattle. The European Economic Community is a surplus producer of beef. That is why they don't want our meat. They simply wanted an excuse.

Dr. Russell Cross is an internationally respected animal scientist at Texas A&M. He told me that only 10 percent of estrogen consumed by mouth is actually absorbed by the body. This means, we would have to eat over 400 pounds of treated meat each day to exceed what might be considered a health risk. And if you don't die from the over abundance of hormones, you will certainly die from obesity.

To contract cancer from pesticide-treated apples you would have to eat over 50 pounds of apples and drink over 100 gallons of juice a day, from orchards that have been "over-treated" with such pesticides.

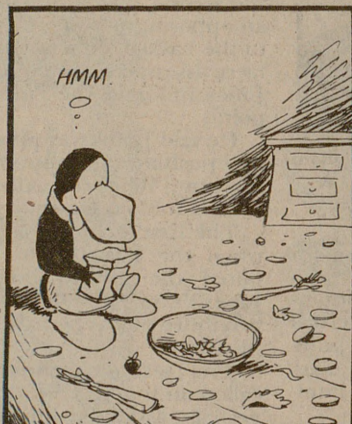
As for the cyanide-tainted grapes, that was a terrorist act, which none of us could control. What we can do is prevent ourselves from over-reacting.

Before we eat, we can be "better safe than sorry." Examine your food. Wash it. Make sure it looks and smells good. You are the best judge of what you are eating. Producers are not purposely trying to poison the American public. Do you think they would actually grow something unhealthy for their families, friends and neighbors?

The USDA and the FDA will try and protect you, and maybe they should get some kind of thanks for it... but they probably won't.

Randy Lemmon is a 1984 graduate of Texas A&M, a communications specialist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and a guest columnist for *The Battalion*.

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