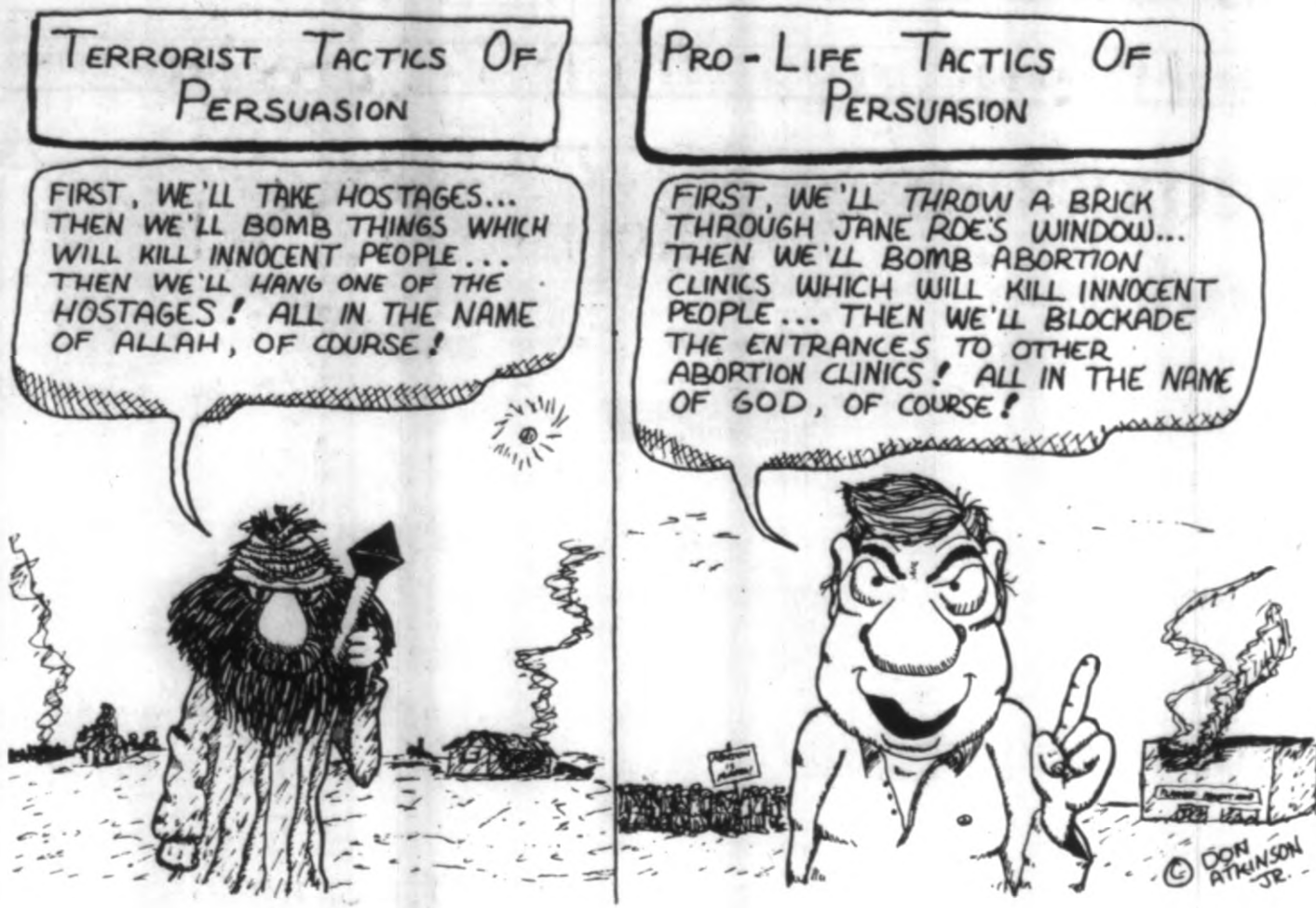


Thursday, August 10, 1989



Congress should just say yes to getting tough with dealers

Drug-related crimes are one of the United States' biggest problems today. At the root of this problem is the simple fact that the laws on drug dealing and smuggling are not stiff enough and not enforced as well as they should be. The quantity of money involved in drug dealing is so large and the penalties are so lenient that the present situation does not offer an adequate solution. If the laws were changed by Congress and the state legislatures to provide a harsher standpoint, there would be fewer dealers of drugs.

The drug problem is serious because it infringes upon our citizens' rights, and brings decay to our society. The United States was founded on certain beliefs, including that a man is free to do whatever he pleases until he harms or intrudes on someone else's rights. The drug trade in America not only restricts our individual rights, it also goes directly against our moral order.

To a drug dealer, the possible consequence of jail is a definite threat, but the dealers have come to realize they will either have enough money to hire a good lawyer to get them off the charges, or they can get out of jail with minimal punishment.

That's not to say that drug dealers never get convicted. But it is obvious from the continuing problem with drugs that the present punishments for dealers cannot sufficiently solve the crisis. Dealers being sent to jail and then released soon after provides no deterrent from returning to sell drugs. As one police officer once said, alluding to the fact that convicted dealers know they won't be held in jail long, "It's such a normal thing for these guys to get locked up, they go down laughing."

Increased penalties won't stop the drugs, but by deterring the dealers from selling drugs, it would make the threat to American society deteriorate.

Under stricter laws, a narcotics smuggler, dealer or manufacturer caught with money or other objects of monetary value (cars, planes) that were used to traffic the drugs, should be made subject to handing over all those assets to the government. These assets can then be rechanneled back into the department who confiscated them to help fight the ongoing war on drugs.

Paul Boyers
Guest Columnist

Seizing these assets is known as zero tolerance, and has already been implemented successfully on a limited scale by certain jurisdictions of law enforcement. The Drug Enforcement Agency, the Coast Guard, the border forces and local law enforcement should all adopt a similar plan of zero tolerance.

Congress and the state legislatures should work to increase penalties for convicted drug dealers. Increased penalties would take the form of longer minimum terms and much longer average terms for convicted drug traffickers. The courts need to engage in more trials and sentencing, and less plea-bargaining, which lets the criminals ultimately spend less time in jail. Also, the laws should be rewritten to remove many of the technicalities that dealers and smugglers use to get their charges dropped.

Once the convicted drug traffickers go to jail, their punishment should be more severe than it is now. Mandatory hard labor (e.g. building bridges, working fields, washing the warden's car) for convicted narcotics dealers would be a good start. Also making them do some sort of productive work like painting signs or making license plates would teach the convict the value of being a meaningful member of society.

Many critics of increased penalties would say that increasing the prison term of drug dealers will overcrowd the prisons. This might happen at first, but with the help of Congress and state legislatures, funding could be found to increase the number and capacities of prisons in this nation, especially in the states with high drug trafficking.

Other skeptics would say that we need to concentrate our efforts on the demand side instead of the supply side of drugs. In other words, many people believe the key to solving America's drug problem is education, not deterrence. Although education should be stressed and properly funded, it is not the magic key for unlocking the drug problem. No matter how much drug education is provided to our citizens, drug

abuse will continue. The only way to stop this abuse is through direct intervention of the smuggling and peddling of narcotics.

This country is being overwhelmed by the drug problem. The current laws make it hard to catch the drug dealers and even harder to convict them. America's leaders need to change the punishment for these illegal activities to better suit the reasonable fears of the American people. This country stands on its unity, and drug traffickers are not helping society, but rather destroying it. Something has to change, and the punishment for the smuggling, manufacturing and selling of drugs should be increased to affect that change.

Paul Boyers is a freshman general studies major and a guest columnist for The Battalion.

People, get ready — the parking shaft's comin'

Last January, Texas A&M opened its first multi-level parking garage. It had been anxiously awaited by many students who were looking for alternatives to shuttle buses and other types of transportation. Originally, the new parking garage was offered to ALL students on a first come, first served basis, until it was full. Then students who wanted spaces were put on a waiting list so that eventually, they too could use the garage.



Damon Arhos
Columnist

But our friends over at A&M's Department of Parking, Traffic and Transit have recently made it known that as of Sept. 1, reserved spaces in the new parking garage will no longer be offered to off-campus students. Those off-campus students who are currently on the waiting list will be offered spaces as they come available until Sept. 1, and those students who do not have reserved spaces by then will be dropped from the list.

Tom Williams, director of A&M's Parking, Traffic and Transit Department, has said that the new policy is part of the University's "original plan" for the garage. Williams said the garage was built for students who live in the residence halls.

If the garage was originally built for those students who live in the residence halls, why were spaces offered to off-campus students in the first place? It seems strange to me that students were not notified of the University's "original plan" from the beginning. Maybe if students had been aware of the University's intentions for the garage, many off-campus students would not have wasted time trying to get a space.

And speaking of notification, the only way the department has publicized the policy change is on the back of a map distributed only to garage patrons. No effort has been made to inform those on the waiting of the change. This policy, which has supposedly been planned ever since the garage was built, was not even printed in the 1989 fall class schedule. In fact, the schedule says that the spaces will continue to be "available on a first come, first served basis." And if The Battalion had not reported the story Aug. 3, many students probably never would have known.

This "new" policy extends to the new Southside Parking Garage, scheduled for completion in Sept. 1990. So all you off-campus students, get ready. Pretty soon your options will be severely limited.

While on-campus students will be able to choose where they want to park every day, off-campus students will be herded into over-crowded blue lots (all two of them), forced into park-and-ride situations, or will have no other choice than to ride the shuttle buses.

Not that riding shuttle buses is all that bad. I rode the shuttle buses my entire freshman year. But the fact is that I chose to ride the shuttle buses. And the right to choose a mode of transportation is important. What about those students who don't live on bus routes? Should these students be excluded from taking advantage of the new parking garages? I say no.

And how did the University pay for the new garages? Did they only use money allocated from on-campus students' tuitions, or did some of the money from off-campus students' fees finance the construction? It would be difficult to understand if the latter was true.

With the University's enrollment reaching record highs, the parking situation will surely get worse. And it is amazing that while many more students live off-campus than on, the Department of Parking, Traffic and Transit is restricting the parking garages solely to on-campus students.

With only two complaints having been registered with the Department, it is unlikely that the policy will change. So if you are one of those off-campus students who are on the waiting list for the parking garage, or if you are just an off-campus student interested in parking in the garage, you better hurry. Your parking privileges are about to be revoked.

Damon Arhos is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Ditch ethnicity references

EDITOR:

While reading "Police Beat" in the August 3 edition of The Battalion I became very disturbed.

It was reported that "a black male was observed struggling to take a thirty gallon trash container out of the MSC. It was later realized by the observer that the man had stolen a Goldstar 13" color television set from the employee breakroom."

I want to know why this person had to be referred to as a "black male." In other incidents, I read "person," "owner," "Bryan juveniles," and "student" on several occasions.

I wish The Battalion or the UPD could explain why this person had to be referred to as a "black male." Are we supposed to assume that every other individual is white? Hispanic? Asian? Indian?

If there is no answer, please refer to everyone equally.

Roland S. Martin 91
Vice-President, National Association of Black Journalists

EDITOR'S NOTE: The term "black male" was taken from a police report provided by the University Police Department. The reference was not intended to be offensive or derogatory. The Battalion Editorial Board has decided to refrain from future references to ethnicity unless identification by race is pertinent. The Battalion apologizes to those who may have been offended and regrets the error.

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.

WELCOME TO A+M
"WE'RE NOT LIKE
THE OTHER SCHOOLS"



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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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