

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO PEOPLE WHO THINK THOSE "NO FAT CHICKS" BUMPERSTICKERS ARE FUNNY...



## Let's count the vote

Jeff Farmer  
Guest Columnist

The East Germans are voting.

In the last few weeks, thousands of East German people, most of them quite young, have left East Germany for the west. They have come through Czechoslovakia and Hungary, mainly because Hungary has dismantled the fences along its border with Austria and told the border guards not to shoot anyone who tries to pass. So thousands of East Germans on vacation in Hungary just didn't go home. And this week they have been joined by others. These people are voting with their feet.

It is estimated that perhaps 100,000 people will leave East Germany this year, and perhaps many more. In a few years, the total could reach half a million. This is no insignificant drain on a country with a population of 16.8 million.

The situation of the Germans is unique. After WWII, Germany was divided between the victors, and the Russian Zone became the (communist) German Democratic Republic (GDR), while the three western zones (those of Britain, France and the USA) became the (democratic) Federal Republic of Germany. For over 40 years East Germany has followed Marx, Lenin and the Soviet brand of communism while West Germany has followed Britain and the U.S. into a modern system of democracy with a mixed economy. It's probably the closest thing to a controlled experiment in political economy that we will ever see on such a large scale.

The two Germans share a common language, culture and history. Of the many West German citizens I have met over the years, there have been few who do not have family or friends in the East. West German television stations are situated near the border so that the East Germans can (illegally, of course) watch the broadcasts. East Germans who come west receive resettlement aid and automatic citizenship in the Federal Republic.

From the beginning the outcome was clear. Only a decade or so after the war the East German government put up a fence between the two countries (around West Berlin the fence is a wall), and began the barbaric practice of shooting to death any of their citizens who tried to leave. But people have been leaving anyway: by boat, by tunnel, by car, day and night, year after year. The numbers were fairly small, however, and the East German "Fuehrer," Erich Honecker (age 77, in power since 1971) could continue to exercise absolute control over people who were forced at gunpoint to stay.

Today perestroika is sweeping the communist world, and Hungary has dismantled its part of the Iron Curtain. But Honecker is of the old school of communism, and vows not to change. The wall will never come down, he says.

Honecker's people are tired of tending to his b.s. They have a chance to leave and they are taking it. A nation that has dwindled from over 17 million in 1949 to less than 17 million today will be further depleted. Those who leave are disproportionately young — East Germany is believed to have the highest proportion of young people in Europe. These young people are skilled and educated; they are the ones who the GDR can ill-afford to lose.

There are several lessons for us in this. We are reminded to appreciate how precious indeed freedom is. It is a parable of history: you can't keep a people down forever. Deny blacks their rights, and they will march to the courthouse. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. are dead, but their legacy is the struggle for civil rights that today is taking place all over the world.

In the final analysis, the only way to keep people from being free is to deny them. "Give me liberty or give me death" is not so much a battle cry as a statement of political reality. It doesn't let people vote with their feet; they will vote with their money, their mouths, their feet and eventually their lives.

The ever-decreasing population of the GDR serves as a scientific demonstration of the failure of an idea: that a government can order its citizens to live better than they can. It's an idea whose time has gone. We should keep that in mind whenever we are tempted to see our government as the solution to social and economic problems.

A few years ago (in the B.G. days before Gorbachev) a German friend of mine told me a joke that was made the rounds over there. It goes like this:

One morning Erich Honecker had to go to work at his office in Berlin. As he drove through the city he noticed that there were no cars on the roads, and no people on the sidewalks. When he got to the government buildings, they were deserted, too. He began to wander around the city and found it to be completely empty. Finally, he came to the wall, and saw there was a large hole blown in it. Tacked on a post beside the hole was a note that said: "Erich — when you come through, please turn out the lights."

That joke from several years ago is becoming reality today. There's a hole in the wall and the people are pouring through. Wake up and smell the coffee, Erich. It's way past time to retire.

Your people are voting.

Jeff Farmer is a graduate student in mathematics and a guest columnist for The Battalion.

## Mail Call

### So tired, tired of waiting

**EDITOR:**  
BATCH SUBMITTED, WAITING FOR REPLY. And waiting, and waiting...  
After standing in line for two hours to get football tickets, I noticed these words flashing on the computer screen after my ID card was inserted. Then the employee sat there, waiting for an answer, and this process lasted about thirty seconds, whereupon I was given my tickets. Thirty seconds may not seem long, until one considers that 200 people, each with about 10 IDs, had been ahead of me.  
Although I'm sure A&M will improve the system in the next few years, why must we be subjected to a procedure that is currently not efficiently operable? I thought the

university had learned its lesson a few years ago, when they forced the students to use a very poor phone registration system. I might add that the phone process is fine now, but a few years ago it was ridiculously inept.

The point is, technological progress is great, but it shouldn't be utilized until it functions properly. We are waiting for common sense at A&M. And waiting, and waiting...

Pat Fitzpatrick  
Graduate student

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.

# Lack of respect for opinion may cause death of country

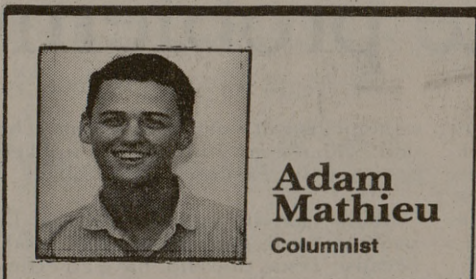
There has been a great deal of talk about the unity at Texas A&M over the last week. Parts of it have been reasonable, while others parts have been highly colored by prejudice and intolerance. This is a tired subject that doesn't merit any more discussion. The underlying feature of much discussion actually is the terrible arrogance and resulting lack of tolerance for differing outlooks and alternative solutions.

We can see this attitude in many areas of our lives. Our government exhibits it all the time. Government rhetoric has created some myths from which destructive attitudes have resulted.

We have been told all of our lives that the United States is the greatest nation on earth. This statement was always "proved" by the fact that the United States has saved the world twice in this century, that we are the greatest economic and military power in the world, and we are the most protective of personal freedoms. These facts can only confirm the belief that the United States was ordained by God to run the world.

Only recently have some people attempted to erode these myths with actual fact and not with demagoguery. However, when these people speak they are instructed to leave, "that Highway 6 runs both ways," to use a phrase we all know.

This represents the fundamental problem. Loving something is not remaining quiet while the loved one dies. One does not say to one's parent, "I



Adam Mathieu  
Columnist

know you have a terrible drinking problem. But I love you, so I'm going to let you die without criticizing you."

I realize this is not a perfect analogy, but it does illustrate certain facts. The people who supposedly love this country are the ones who now instruct the dissident "pinkos" to leave. This is dangerously wrong. Many of the founders to whom these people refer were so opposed to status quo that today we would ostracize them, labeling them "commies."

Not all dissenting opinions are valuable. However, they all deserve enough respect that we should at least listen to them. Many of the nations of the world have confronted and solved some of the problems that the United States faces today, but our blind American ignorance prohibits us from listening to them. These solutions are dismissed because they either come from "socialist, freedom-hating countries" or from "primitive backwaters." As a result, we have missed a great number of great ideas.

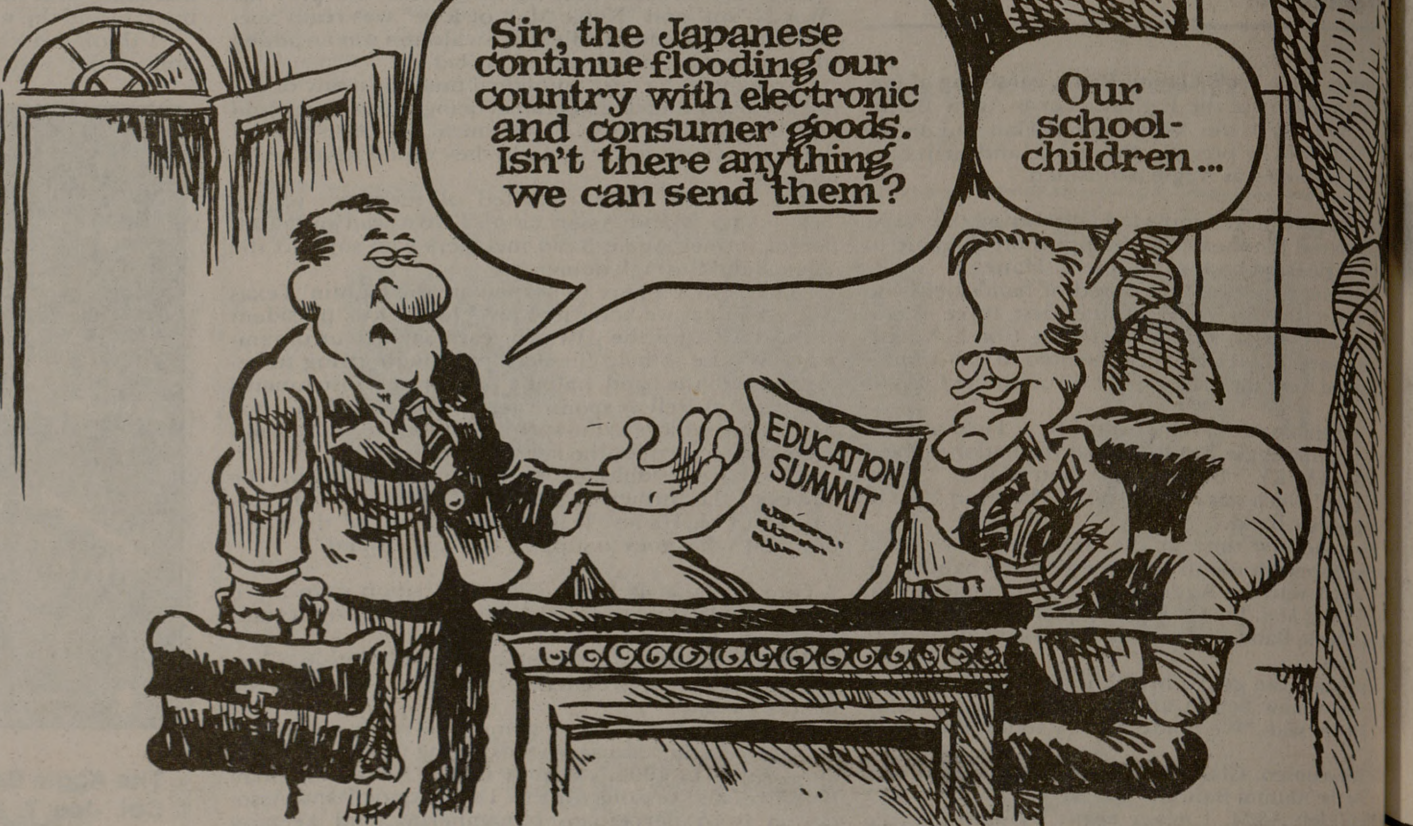
I do not even understand this American arrogance. We are not the best nation on earth any more for a large number of reasons. We are in the

process of becoming a second-class economic power because we are out-competed in virtually every world market. We have a nationwide addiction to drugs and the violence that these drugs engender, although I must say that I don't feel comfortable criticizing the drug industry too strongly because it provides some of the only jobs in our abandoned inner cities. In short, we have been so mired in talking about how great we are that we have let that greatness disappear.

I have no problem with American pride. However, I resent mindless American bragging. We are no longer the greatest nation on earth. We are just another country in a world of countries. We must begin to respect different opinions from other countries and from within our own. Otherwise we will all be able to witness how a world power dies.

Adam Mathieu is a senior chemistry major and a columnist for The Battalion.

MARGULIES  
© 1989 HOUSTON POST



## The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of  
Texas Press Association  
Southwest Journalism Conference

### The Battalion Editorial Board

- Scot Walker, Editor
- Wade See, Managing Editor
- Juliette Rizzo, Opinion Page Editor
- Fiona Soltes, City Editor
- Ellen Hobbs, Chuck Squatriglia, News Editors
- Tom Kehoe, Sports Editor
- Jay Janner, Art Director
- Dean Sueltenfuss, Lifestyles Editor

### 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.