

Inaction leads to tyranny of the vocal minority

Allegations of censorship have been in the news a lot lately. Tipper Gore and the Rev. Donald Wildmon have in different ways been objecting loudly and publicly to reading or viewing certain things which they find objectionable. Here in the Land of the Free — where we very much like to talk, yell and scream about various inherent rights while we seldom actually do anything to protect them — these people's actions have stirred up quite a bit of rhetoric about the evils of censorship as opposed to the necessity of protecting our so-easily-influenced minds from the horrors of immoral writing or programming.

I subscribe to the libertarian philosophy of journalism, and — more importantly — I consider myself intelligent and free-thinking enough to be able to resist undue influence from things I read or see without any help from Dippy Tippy. Therefore, I disagree with the philosophies of all the above-mentioned people. However, I also disagree with a lot of the statements of the well-inten-



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tioned liberals who have been speaking out against this type of "censorship."

The fact is, it's not *censorship*. It's *censurship*. According to unabridged Webster's, censorship involves control exercised repressively, while censurship involves forming and announcing an opinion, especially one of disapproval. There is a big difference between the two. Censorship is anathema to anyone who proclaims belief in the Constitutional rights of free speech and expression.

Censurship, on the other hand, is just a natural human reaction that is an inherent part of our societal systems.

Wildmon is one of the more recent of the morality crusaders, so I'll use him as an example. His big beef is with television shows, which he claims are full of sex and violence and adultery and immorality. (So is the Bible, but that's not my point). One of Wildmon's methods is to make lists of all the shows he finds objectionable, and then to threaten the companies that buy advertising during those shows (his list presently includes *thirtysomething*, *The Golden Girls*, and *Cheers*, among dozens of others). Either the company pulls its advertising from the show, or Wildmon puts the company on a blacklist, and urges all decent-minded Americans not to buy their products. The hope is obviously that enough advertisers will pull their business to convince the networks to cancel the show.

What Wildmon is doing is actually a prime example of capitalism in action, and no one in the above scenario can be faulted for their actions. Wildmon sees something to which he objects, and he is perfectly within his

rights to censor it. The advertisers are in business for one reason: to make money. The only way to do that is to keep their customers happy. If the threat of a boycott appears serious enough to do some kind of financial damage to the company, then they absolutely have to respond to it. Same goes for the network: If they are losing advertisers, they have to change something to keep from losing more and to regain the ones they lost. Simple economics. Companies don't have souls or morals or ideals, and under our capitalistic system, they aren't supposed to. It just comes down to money.

Same applies to the deal the record companies made with Tipper Gore. The companies agreed to voluntarily put warning labels on records with adult content, such as profanity or sexually explicit language. Nothing idealistic here; the companies were just responding to public pressure in order to protect their future profits.

(Quick side note: Record stores report that records with labels sell more than those without. So stick that on your list and censor it, Tipper.)

(Quick side note number two: What Tip

the Drip originally wanted was for Congress to pass a law banning the sale of those records. If that had passed, then yes, it would indeed have been censorship, and I would be writing a totally different column.)

OK, so what should we do?

First of all, we have to stop letting people like Wildmon and Gore beat us with our system. We need to be as loud as they are. We need to censor them, and censor advertisers and networks who give in to them. We need to work within the system.

What do you think would happen if all people who watch *Cheers*, *The Golden Girls*, and *thirtysomething* got together and threatened to boycott all the advertisers who give in to Wildmon and his types? You're right. We'd win. No doubt about it, because there are more of us than there are them. They are just louder than we are, if we suffer from tyranny of the minority cause of our own inaction, then we deserve whatever we get.

Scot Walker is a junior journalism student and editor of The Battalion.

Vote no to Prop. one, 11

In Matt McBurnett's column of Wednesday Oct. 4, he said Texas legislators are underpaid and need a raise. In all probability, the great majority of Texans would agree with this, contingent on certain conditions such as banning all money from PACs and lobbyists. However, the columnist failed to address the real issue — political chicanery under the guise of a constitutional amendment.

As Clay Robison, Austin bureau chief for the *Houston Chronicle* points out, if Proposition One is approved, the Texas Constitution would be amended to allow the legislators to determine their own pay and grant raises as often as they like.

Proposition One reads, "To limit the salary of the Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to not more than half of the Governor's salary and to limit the salary of a member of the legislature to not more than one-fourth of the Governor's salary."

Sounds great, doesn't it? The key word is "limit." However, taking into consideration that the legislature sets the Governor's salary and can raise it or lower it without voter approval, the true intent of the Legislature becomes clear; to mislead the people of Texas into giving the Texas Legislature the right, without voter approval, to raise their own salaries at will. To add insult to injury, if you will, Proposition 11 would raise the per diem to \$81, the maximum allowed by federal law.

Even in public service, there should be fair and just compensation for services and time rendered. Of course, it must be according to predetermined and acceptable guidelines.

Those who argue that a Legislator's job is part-time choose to ignore or fail to comprehend the realities of contemporary state government. Actual time spent in the chambers is minimal. However, in order to reach the right decision, considerable time must be spent in collecting, analyzing and disseminating the large amount of information pertinent to Texas and its constituents. Of equal absurdity, is the contention that low salaries are the source of all the problems and that salaries should be comparable to those of corporate officers and professionals. Public service is not a corporation or a profession.

Two factors must be considered in any discussion of pay raises:

1. Those who run for the legislature must come to the realization that, although a full-time job, it is public service and not a career opportunity to make money.

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Guest Columnist

2. Legislators have certain financial, family and job-related obligations that have to be met.

In lieu of raising salaries and the per diem, why not furnish the Legislators and their families with the basic necessities. A complex of condos or apartments could be built. Fashionable and comfortable without extravagance. All bills paid. Add a food service system and a few amenities. Each representative would have year-round use of their district's unit for as long as they are in office.

As for salaries, that could be determined by a non-partisan public committee, not by the people who would benefit by the raises.

What else does a Texas Legislator need to legislate?

Gib Lewis, the Speaker of the Texas House, recently was quoted as saying that morale was low in Austin. Public service was not fun anymore. No money and too much public scrutiny. Perhaps those out to make money should raise exotic animals or sell used cars. As to whether public scrutiny is indeed warranted, read the daily revelations of millions of dollars from lobbyists, questionable public and private activity and political chicanery under the pretense of amendments to the Texas Constitution.

There will be those who argue that just because the legislators have the right to raise salaries, does not mean they will. Although the majority of the Texas Legislature are well-intentioned, honorable men and women, it would be difficult for them to not raise their own salaries. Conditions, circumstances and human nature dictate otherwise.

Ironically, you can not fault the Legislators. The citizens of Texas have allowed this to happen. They are the only ones who can change it.

Vote against Propositions One and 11. Then write your Texas Legislators and tell them to become true representatives of their constituents. Texas does not need pawns to special interests and prisoners of individual ambitions serving in the Legislature. If they do change, then they would possibly deserve a raise.

Grady Dale Ray is Precinct Chairman of the Brazos County Democratic Executive committee and a guest columnist for The Battalion.

Testing who's timid and who's not

Democrats have launched an autumn political offensive, accusing President Bush of timidity — which is a slightly kinder way of saying wimp.

It's a label Bush confronted and overcame when he was a candidate. Now there is a toughening tone at the White House, and from Bush's Republican allies in Congress, against the risk that Democrats can revive the image as an issue by calling him a hesitant, timid leader.

Among other things, the president is vowing to stand, lobby and fight for a capital gains tax reduction, something the leader of Senate Democrats says he will not get.

The House passed the tax measure as part of a budget bill, but the Senate stripped it away and differences between the two bills now are under negotiation. The White House said Bush will look for the first opportunity to push the issue to a vote in the Senate, where the administration claims it can get majority support in an up or down test. Bush is expected to contact as many as 20 senators in a personal lobbying drive for the tax cut he advocated as a candidate.

"He's going to press for it and it's not the greatest issue of our times, but it sure as hell is a campaign promise that he kept and I think that's what people admire about him," said Sen. Alan K. Simpson of Wyoming, the Republican whip.

Another challenge to the Democrats: Vice President Dan Quayle said Bush may pick an issue and try to veto one item in a composite bill, thus claiming a power of line-item veto both he and Ronald Reagan have sought.

"We are looking for a vehicle that might be a suitable test case," said White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater.

With that power, Bush could, for ex-

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ample, have vetoed only the abortion language in the appropriations bill he rejected last Saturday because it provided federal funds for Medicaid abortions in cases of rape or incest.

The idea of forcing a legal challenge and a court decision on whether a president already has the power to veto specific items is not new business. It was discussed during the Reagan years, but never pushed to a test.

And nobody said it was going to happen this time. But raising the prospect fits the strategy of counterattack, drawing a line against the Democrats running Congress, where the power to build hostage items into hard-to-veto bills always has been guarded against administration inroads.

Rep. Richard A. Gephardt of Missouri, the House majority leader, sounded the Democratic offensive:

"The key to the current Republican strategy has been to perpetuate a precarious status quo. Any great changes, even those that might inure to America's benefit, are avoided at all costs. Change is to be put off. The status quo is to be preserved."

"George Bush appears to be determined to go down in history as the hesitation president," Gephardt said in a speech at the National Press Club a week ago. "At least his first year in office could be entitled 'The Year of Living Timidly.'"

Sen. George Mitchell of Maine, leader of the Senate's Democratic majority, already had accused Bush of "timidity" in dealing with the opportunities opened by the move toward democracy in eastern Europe.

The House has voted to approve nearly twice as much aid for Poland

and Hungary as the administration proposed.

Democratic leaders and more than a few Republicans complained at administration inaction in the brief and failed Panamanian coup against Manuel Noriega.

Congress forced Bush into an abortion veto that could hurt Republican the Democrats outmaneuvered him flag-burning by passing a law he did want and rejecting a constitutional amendment he sought.

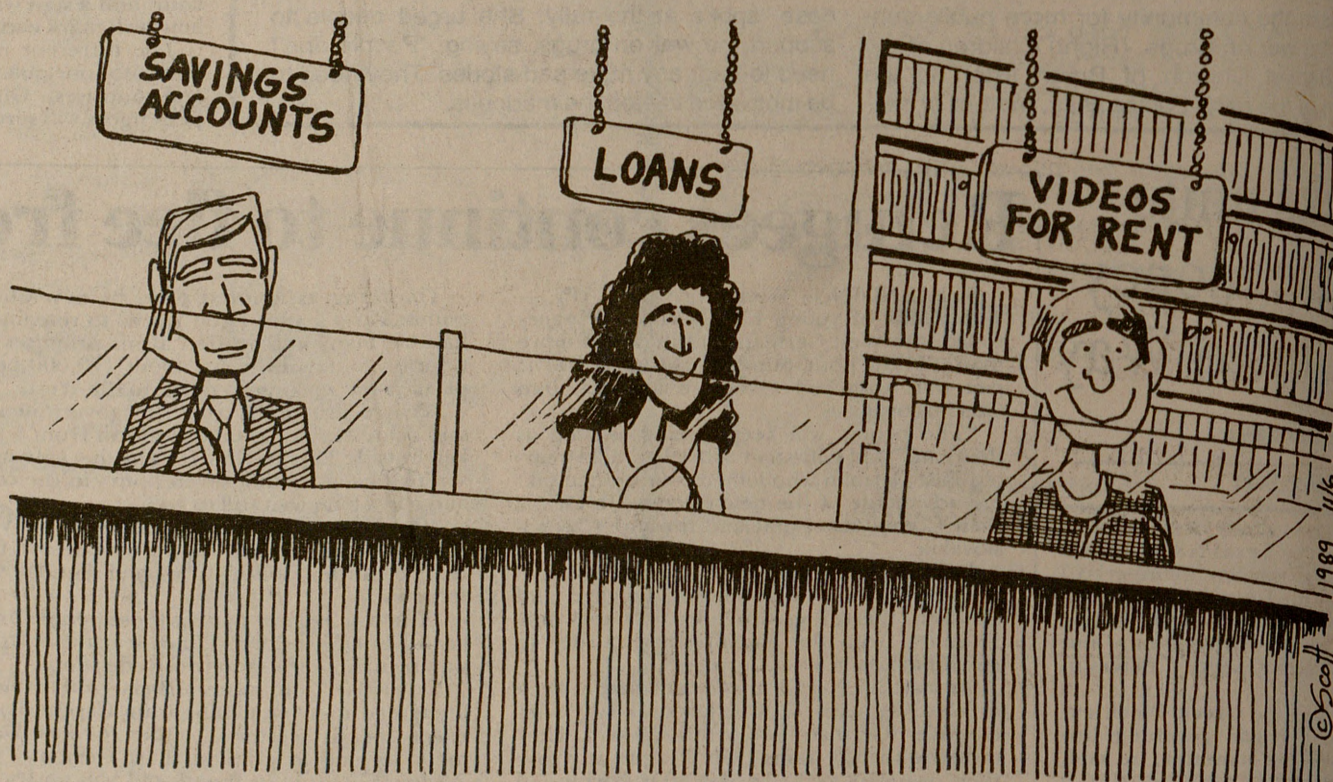
"For the last three weeks, as it comes more and more obvious that Democratic leadership of the Congress can't get their job done, they have been attacking President Bush more and more aggressively," said Rep. Newt Gingrich, the House Republican whip.

For all of that, the Democrats had trouble finding the voices and themes to compete with the White House. Gephardt acknowledged the problem, saying that congressional Democrats must present a coherent program, not a batch of unconnected issues. He said they're still trying to hope to put together a consensus Democratic agenda to be presented next year.

First, Congress and the president will have to settle the capital gains fight along with other major issues — the rival child care programs; a minimum wage bill to replace one Bush vetoed too high and might veto again because of his insistence on a lower training wage for new workers; differences on how and how much to spend fighting drugs; the stalled budget bill that forced automatic, if probably temporary, spending cuts.

There's plenty there to test who's timid and who isn't.

Walter R. Mears is vice president and columnist for The Associated Press.



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