

Racial tolerance needed instead of racial apathy

Of all the universities in the state, Texas A&M has the highest minority retention rate. Minorities comprise 18.7 percent of the 40,492 students at A&M.

Harold Hodgkison, a noted demographer, says it is important to involve minorities in all areas of education, especially higher education. By the year 2000 he predicts one-third of the nation will be considered an ethnic minority.

The fact that the University recognizes the need for equal opportunity to educate all students does not mean all of us are willing to accept this. Racial apathy exists consciously and subconsciously on campus. If we allow this apathy to continue, we as a nation will not be able to compete internationally because we'll be fighting against ourselves.

The increase in the number of minority student groups on campus and the establishment of the Multicultural Services Center, which will soon become a department, has put A&M ahead of other schools.

But although the University administration has made great strides toward eliminating racial bias, the impact has to be felt by the student body in order to be effective. For A&M to maintain its attractiveness to minorities, we need to upkeep an environment conducive to tolerance.

The Battalion Editorial Board



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And the wall came tumbling down

Somebody turned on the power. People — moving, streaming, breaking through, tearing down, embracing and cheering.

Modern mass media spreads the exhilarated atmosphere all over the world. Incredible...

At this same time, you walk across campus; you go to Sbis for lunch. Across the world, in the air, everywhere: "...thousands left...the wall is down...they just come over... freedom..."

This unforeseeable development brought about widespread personal excitement that I never experienced before in my life. Born after it was built, I knew the Berlin Wall and accepted it as a part of German life.

In the past, the one who questioned whether or when the wall might fall was suspected to be a dreamer.

But now, the television news acts like a drug — every time I turn it on I get a flash. They celebrate with concerts from Beethoven to Joe Cocker. I wish I was there. Though I have no personal relations to the GDR, I feel the hearts dancing across the Atlantic.

Even though I've only been here a year, I feel like I know the United

States a lot better than East Germany. Now an old dream of a self-planned bicycle tour in East Germany may come true.

As soon as a conversation reveals my German accent, one issue comes up: reunification.

The shattering of the postwar order in Europe and the two Germanies growing closer together brings reunification up automatically. However, there are more things separating East and West Germany.

East German leader Egon Krenz does not want to adopt the western system. It has been called an "Elbow-Society" not only by old-fashioned communists. The East German constitution states a right of work. On the other side, West Germans do not see a lot of reasons to modify their system.

A relaxed soviet leader is cautiously observing allies and a good portion of people's power, while the East German leadership is acting smart enough to keep up with the requested pace. Fortunately, no retaliating violence against communist party leaders has been necessary.

The reunification entails talking about a peace treaty. Hence, many issues will be brought up that have been



Hermann Koch

buried for a long, long time. And the concerns of our neighbors about an (economically?) strong Germany should be taken seriously.

A French comment was heard: "Two Germanies are OK, I'd rather like to have three." I can understand this.

What does reunification stand for? I don't need the feeling of coming from a "great country." Since any step taken

towards that would make other people suspicious, Germans should be very careful addressing that question. This is not the hour of nationalism, but of people's power, freedom and democracy.

And there are still enough concrete points to be stressed: development from free travel to free movement, acknowledgment of non-communist parties, free elections with possible loss of power and liberalization from the hydrocephalic bureaucracy towards a market economy.

I can well imagine two Germanies respecting each other as neighbors in a relationship as it has been achieved between France and the Federal Republic. In my opinion, free movement, intensive trade, extensive tourism and different constitutions based on the same ideas of individual rights would form a satisfying solution to the "German question."

Several questions remain with the opening of the inner-German border. There is a severe housing shortage in West and East. Many of the people moving to the west will not find a job. Those who do, will increase social pressure in West Germany due to the staggering unemployment, which reaches over 15 percent in some areas.

This might lead to individual disappointment and frustration. But all this does and must remain minor with regard to the achievements. Once freedom of movement is established, some of the problems could be leveled out by Germans moving from the west to the east, from where a lack of labor is reported. Even if this point turns out to be fantasy, there are more solutions. They might be costly and take time, but they must never tend to prevent people from moving where they want.

The Federal Republic could encourage East German citizens to stay by taking the restructuring of their economy every step further in order to curb migration would discredit the commitment to freedom and democracy.

However, aside from all the big and worry about the future one thing has been achieved that cannot be reversed: The Fall of the Wall turned a divided city into the greatest part of the world (even bigger than the one in Texas where they say everything supposed to be bigger and better).

But people in South Africa and elsewhere are still waiting to join the party.

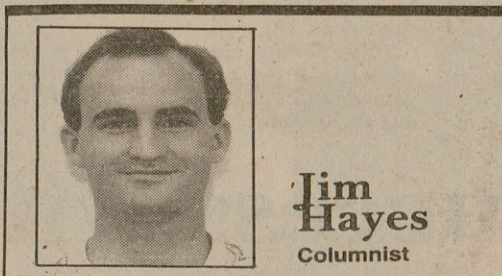
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A referendum on spring ballot could halt bonfire controversies

A controversy regarding the annual Aggie bonfire has been lighting up the pages of *The Battalion* all month thus far. You may recall the Page 1 headline on November 2: "Aggies Against Bonfire organize; pro-bonfire group attends meeting." Letters to the editor supporting bonfire followed.

An article in Tuesday's *Batt* told of the Campus Ministry Association unanimously passing a resolution calling for an end to bonfire as it now exists. On the same day another article described Faculty Senate action that established a committee to review the tradition of bonfire.

These reports reflect a growing movement to abolish bonfire. Problems



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Columnist

with bonfire center around five concerns.

One involves the risk of injury to those who work on it. Many minor and a few serious injuries happen every year in bonfire-building accidents. Two deaths — in 1955 and 1981 — have also occurred.

A second issue involves the threat of embers being blown from Duncan Field and setting fire to houses located in the residential area off Jersey Street/George Bush Drive. This risk presents an obvious concern to residents of the area.

A third issue involves the environmental cost of bonfire. The deforestation of hundreds of trees has sparked much criticism.

A fourth issue involves a concern that the time and effort students put into bonfire is wasted. Workers' grades drop because of the time they put into bonfire.

And a fifth issue involves the drunkenness of those attending.

Aggies Against Bonfire, the Campus Ministry Association and the Faculty Senate all touched upon one or more of these issues when voicing their complaints.

Despite these concerns, bonfire still has a lot of support.

Letter writers who support the annual tradition have stated that bonfire helps to cultivate personal character, work habits, and friendships. They also have expressed their deep devotion to the tradition.

The thousands of students who work days and weekends cutting and

stacking the logs used to build bonfire strongly support the tradition with their actions. And the tens of thousands of people who show up annually to watch it burn boost the tradition with their attendance.

Further, some alumni undoubtedly would oppose, for tradition's sake, the idea of abolishing bonfire.

The problems accompanying the bonfire are difficult to resolve; that is why the movement to abolish it is gaining strength. Yet many people strongly support the tradition. How can these differences be resolved?

Putting a bonfire referendum on the spring election ballot could help to resolve the controversy. Such action would establish a mechanism for measuring student opinion regarding the tradition.

Tradition assumes that students at A&M generally support bonfire. That consensus of support now seems questionable. Yet, no measurement of student opinion regarding bonfire has been taken. The referendum could determine student opinion regarding bonfire, and the controversy might be put to rest until the next spring or end permanently with the abolition of bonfire.

Even if bonfire lost at the polls, the tradition would not necessarily have to die. Alumni, student organizations and

individual students could pool their resources to plan, fund, build and hold an annual bonfire somewhere off campus.

Given that this other option would be available, a bonfire referendum might seem pointless. Yet there is a difference between a Texas A&M sanctioned bonfire and a privately held one. If it carries the school's name, it helps to shape the school's image.

With a new environmental movement emerging that forbids resource-wasting, holding an annual bonfire will hurt A&M's image among growing numbers of people in the years to come.

If a majority of voting students decides that bonfire needs to go — this or other reasons — the referendum would allow this to become known.

The annual Aggie bonfire has been an established tradition here for many years. Now that a well-founded movement to abolish it is emerging, it could be witnessing the Last Aggie Bonfire in a few weeks.

Putting a bonfire referendum on the spring election ballot would provide an important mechanism by which the true student opinion of bonfire could be found.

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The Battalion

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