

## Protest groups should focus on local issues

The past few years have witnessed the growth of several organizations at A&M that are dedicated to protest. Although groups such as Students Against Apartheid and the Medicine Tribe should be commended for their attempts to raise social awareness in an era when many students have little concern for such topics, the organizations' effectiveness would increase if they focused more on local issues.

SAA's choice to publicize the wrongs being committed in South Africa is not necessarily a bad one. But by focusing their concerns on A&M's divestment from South African companies — the effectiveness of which is disputed — the members of SAA have chosen to give less priority to problems in Bryan-College Station.

Instead of protesting the living conditions of a country that is thousands of miles away, why not do something about the shanty-like houses in which some of our neighbors live? Instead of building a shanty near the Academic Building, why not sponsor periodic food drives (as SAA — to its credit — has done in the past) to benefit area residents who do not have enough money to buy their own food?

Another example of misdirected effort is the Medicine Tribes' protesting of the planned Memorial Student Center expansion. Instead of spending time trying to save a few campus oak trees, why not work to solve pollution problems through recycling? Why not help local homeless people by donating time to the Salvation Army, Brazos Food Bank or other groups?

The Medicine Tribe's recent effort to help needy Bryan-College Station residents by sponsoring a food drive exemplifies this kind of community concern. The members of Medicine Tribe should be commended for the work they are doing this week. Hopefully, groups like SAA and the Medicine Tribe will continue to focus on important local issues such as poverty, pollution and inadequate housing and will dwell less on topics such as the MSC expansion.

Except for aesthetics and sentimental value, the MSC oaks are not important. The family living in a shack in South Africa probably does not know or care that students thousands of miles away are protesting apartheid.

The family down the street or the homeless person standing on the corner, however, could use our help.

The Battalion Editorial Board

## Getting the facts on abortion

In the past few months I came across quite a few articles on the abortion issue. I am really surprised to read the narrow-minded views of some of the columnists, particularly Mr. Stansfield. He was complaining about not having facts in some of the previous articles, but at the same time he himself did not care to provide any documented facts to support his statements. I think he was just writing his personal opinion, which is biased to one side of the issue. In order to enlighten people like Mr. Stansfield, I did a library search and found the following information from the U.S. government publication "National Databook and Guide to Sources Statistical Abstract of the U.S. 1989, 109 edition, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census," and a book by J.E. Hodgson (1981).

Ram P. Bhojanala  
Guest Columnist

decreased from 1,750,000 in 1970 to 141,861 in 1982.

1. About three times more abortions are performed on women in the 15-24 years age group than all other age groups.
2. About 4.5 times more abortions are done to unmarried women compared to married women.
3. The total number of first pregnancy abortions outnumber others by three times.
4. Among the western nations, the United States has the largest percentage of abortions among the 15-24 years age group.
5. 88.1 percent of the age group 15-24 years don't have a university degree, and 57.6 percent have never been to a university.
6. 79.3 percent of the total U.S. population above 15 years don't have a university degree, 61.5 percent have never been to a university.
7. The number of orphans decreased from 3,745,000 in 1970 to 2,228,000 in 1987.
8. The number of orphans adopted

Based on these facts, one can see the majority of abortions (4 out of 5) are done to unmarried women and are concentrated in the 15-24 years age group. Also, the education level of the 15-24 years age group is alarmingly low (88.1 percent below college degree.) This implies that, in general, this specific age group is not well educated on the subject of how to be restrained, careful and safe. It shows the general failure of the parents and society (maybe educational institutions) to educate them on how not to get into this situation. This fact is further reinforced when compared with the abortion age distribution in other western countries. The first-time-pregnancy abortion data infers that the people were ignorant or not ready to face the situation, that is why they opted for abortion.

One of the major arguments among anti-abortion groups is the babies can be adopted. However, the facts show the number of adoptions are far less than the number of orphans present in the country. As the number of abortions increased between 1970 and 1987, and the number of orphans decreased, it can also be seen that women are opting for abortion rather than leaving the children as orphans.

If these unmarried, not-so-well-educated people are forced to have babies, the future for most of these people will be a nightmare. Due to their limited education, they are likely to end up with low-paying jobs. Therefore, they won't be able to support their children and will end up asking for support from the welfare department. In other words, their living standards will be drastically lowered. If this happens to a large segment of people, it will affect the country on the whole due to a limited supply of educated, trained people.

As the large segment of the population has only pre-university education, they as parents may not be in a position to explain and pass on the information to their children in this regard. Maybe their parents never had an education in this regard, so they may feel uncomfortable discussing the subject with their children. It should, however, be passed on to the young people. They should be educated, not punished, for the ignorance of education and social system of the country.

Is it anymore unfair to require anti-abortionists be forced to adopt orphaned children than it is to require other people to go through an unwanted pregnancy? I believe not. Let me give an extreme case to all the anti-abortionists: If you are all so concerned about life, how come you all (at least most of you) eat beef, and other products derived by killing animals. If you care about life, treat all the lives the same, not just human life. If you want to be anti-abortion, turn yourself immediately into a vegetarian. To do otherwise is actually inconsistent with your moral stance.

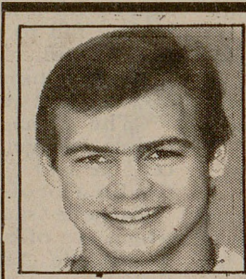
Based on the facts presented here, it can be concluded that education, restriction, is the solution to the abortion issue. Unwanted pregnancies can be controlled by rules and regulations. It may take almost 20 years (one generation) to begin to see the full effect of education, as the people educated will be able to guide the next generation toward learning to be more responsible. The education process will require financial support from the government and citizens to create an infrastructure of education, and to pay new teachers and counselors. Resources may be derived from taxation or cuts in existing programs.

If anyone wants to write an article please support your statements with proper evidence and facts, not just your own opinion.

Ram P. Bhojanala is a graduate student in civil engineering and a guest columnist for The Battalion

## No more speed traps, they're financially dangerous

Most of us have seen speed traps. A speed trap is defined as a worthless small town whose income is so meager that it must be supplemented by speeding ticket fines given to Matt McBurnett.



Matt McBurnett  
Columnist

I am a veteran of the speed trap wars. Maybe some of you can relate to my feelings. If so, you have my sympathy.

My first experience with a bonafide speed trap happened last fall. My home town, Wharton, lies along U.S. highway 59, 55 miles south of Houston. Between the two cities lies Kendleton. One of the smallest, ugliest and most effective speed traps to exist in the brief history since Henry Ford rolled out his first Tin Lizzy. It does not take many more contextual clues to realize that I have been victimized by the Kendleton Kops.

The scene was ugly. I was traveling slightly above the speed limit due to the fact that my speedometer was one of the nervous types that fluctuates 15 m.p.h. to either side of the actual speed. At any rate, I observed through the darkness a set of headlights in a ditch which were not there an instant before. I hit the brakes to no avail. Chalk up another fine for the Kendleton police force — all two of them.

Kendleton cleverly hides its city limit signs. One is behind a tree, the other is behind a larger sign. The speed limit is 55 for no apparent reason. Highway 59 has numerous zones in which the speed limit is 65 and the only traffic problem

in Kendleton is caused by the poor soul who is parked on the shoulder behind one of Kendleton's finest.

I paid my fine and am still feeling the effects on my insurance.

Kendleton certainly does not have a monopoly on the speed trap business. I have found out first hand about a few other ones but the stories are all the same. Each time, the victim is nailed for speeding, often for only two or three m.p.h. above the speed limit, and asks himself what the purpose of these police officers is.

My grandmother, who drove like the stereotypical grandmother, received one ticket in her 40 years of driving. She happened to be doing 56 in a 55 m.p.h. zone. What a drag. I realize that 55 is the limit, but periodically, humans accidentally speed. Shouldn't the police, even in these worthless towns concentrate more on public safety? After all, that is the main purpose of their jobs, and I do not see much harm in an old lady going 56 m.p.h. in a 55 zone.

My experiences with these speed traps has led me to strongly support a Texas bill aimed at slowing down small town speed traps. House Bill 243, sponsored by Rep. Keith Valigura (R—Conroe) was passed in regular session this year. It limited the amount of traffic fines that small towns (less than 5000 people) can obtain to 30 percent of their total annual revenues. The bill was largely tailored to shut down an alleged speed trap in Patton Village, another small town on U.S. 59. Patton Village has no ad valorem taxes and

traditionally has funded up to 80 percent of its services via traffic fines.

Some clever lawyer found a loophole in HB 243 that allows Patton Village and other speed trap towns to retain their fine money under the disguise of "special expenses." Valigura said he is drafting legislation to close the loop-

hole and may get it passed in the current special session, pending the approval of Governor Bill Clements.

I wish this reformed bill godspeed on its journey towards law. If a small town police force is not needed for the protection of the public, it is not needed at all. Kendleton has already

had its police force disbanded and reformed, but it has not been reformed. Leave the patrol of the highways to the highway patrol. After all, they do a damn good job of it.

Matt McBurnett is a junior electrical engineering major and a columnist for The Battalion.

## Mail Call

### Racist cartoon

EDITOR:

In response to the Mon., Nov. 13 cartoon by Don Atkinson and the Wed. Nov. 15 Battalion editorial board statement asking for "racial tolerance" at Texas A&M, I say please make up your minds.

The cartoon, four panels about a fictitious bigot Olympics beginning with the destruction of the Students Against Apartheid shanty, was condemning the destruction of the shanty as ignorant. However, in the last frame of the cartoon, there were four extremely derogatory words used. These words are degrading words used for blacks, Hispanics and Italians.

I understand the cartoon was denouncing the destruction of the shanty, but the use of those horrible words was totally unnecessary and uncalled for. Just seeing them in print (no matter what the context) is enough for some people to say, "Hey, look at that — it's OK." Well it's not OK.

Some people have told me I'm overreacting — that it's just a joke and I just don't understand the cartoonist's intent. Some people have told me they thought the cartoon was funny. And some others, like me, were very offended. Of course, most of those upset were from one of the minority groups that the words described. These people do not make up a majority on this campus, however, and as we all know, in a democracy, majority rules.

Sure, it's a joke. But jokes can easily step over the line of tastefulness and become just plain cruel.

Now, only two days after this, the Battalion editorial board came out and said racial apathy on this campus must be stopped. They said the University's strides in minority retention must be recognized, accepted and helped by the student body. Well, with cartoons like the one two days before, the student body will certainly be aware of the racial problems on this campus. But will they stop using the words appearing in the cartoon? Probably not, when the school's "liberal" newspaper can't or won't stop using them.

Beth Snyder '89

### Different shanty opinion

EDITOR:

In response to Chris Heckmann's article about the Students Against Apartheid shanty, I would like to share a different opinion.

Mr. Heckmann, perhaps all the people you've talked to disagree with the shanty, but allow me to pose this question. How many of those people were black? I am inclined to

assume that there are very few black people at A&M who would disagree to raising awareness and emotions against South Africa and the situation there.

Secondly, you would be surprised to know that there are thousands of people not necessarily confined to this campus that are ignorant to the ills of an unequal society.

Thirdly, if it be so that people don't vandalize the shanty to express racial tension, please write another letter to explain why "KKK" and "niggers die" are examples of phrases written by vandals upon the destruction. Also, please notice the bathroom walls — racial graffiti is all over campus.

I do agree with your declaration that racism is present at A&M, but I believe your reasoning for the destruction [of the shanty] is most erroneous. It is aesthetically offensive to symbolize the human offenses presently perpetrated against the people of South Africa. Just as the shanty, in your opinion, is an eyesore, racism should be a "heartsores" and this is, in my opinion, the purpose of the SAA shanty.

Mr. Heckmann, I dare you to expand your coterie of companions. If you have not already, do a personal survey to see how black Aggies feel about the shanty. SAA members are not fooling themselves, as you say; the only ones fooling themselves are the poor, deprived, ignorant people who refuse to concede that black people are just as good as anyone else, and are unwilling to treat them as such.

God Bless you, Mr. Heckmann.

Chris Henderson '91

### Apartheid is ugly

EDITOR:

I am not a member of Students Against Apartheid. I agree with those who say that the anti-apartheid shanty is ugly, but so is apartheid. I see the shanty as a reminder of the ugliness that does exist in our world. The shanty serves to make us aware of the existence of apartheid. In that respect, SAA is undoubtedly successful, for even those who destroy show awareness through their actions.

The campus is everyone's property, and the members of SAA have as much right to it as anyone else.

We are adults and should act as such. Respect our freedom of expression and stop destroying the shanty.

Heidi Sauer '92

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.

### The Battalion

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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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