

## Mail Call

### Being Christian doesn't make you pro-life

EDITOR:

Arguments concerning abortion fall upon deaf ears, so I do not feel compelled to debate the subject. Just for the record, I am an advocate of pro-choice.

I am also a Christian. It is for this sole reason, Jeff Franks, that your letter in Monday's Battalion deeply offended me.

Ellen Hobbs' feelings and ideas about Christianity are between her and God. If she opts to share these with you it is not your place to tell her she is wrong or pass judgement on her faith.

You also have no right to make assumptions about her religious beliefs. Simply because she wishes to separate her Christianity from that of the letter-senders does not mean she believes Christianity supports murder.

I realize your quips about her Christianity were nothing more than religious sarcasm. However, your sarcastic remarks reek of Christian hypocrisy.

Next time you decide to take a position on an issue, try to stand firm on your beliefs instead of pointing a pious finger from a self-righteous position above.

You also stated that you are adopted, so you believe were it not for previous laws banning abortion you probably would not be here. Please be aware that you are alive today not because of a law but because of a choice your biological mother made. If someone wants to do something badly enough, be it legal or illegal, that person will always find a way to do it. For whatever reason, be it upbringing, religious training, financial background or moral convictions, your mother chose to have you.

Cynthia Alexander '93

### Sperm banks have a down side, too

EDITOR:

Matt McBurnett's views are among the most intelligent and rational in The Battalion, but he forgot to mention the down side in his column on sperm banks.

This service has been controversial since its beginning because it is a giant leap toward selective breeding. Nature and circumstance may be determining factors, but genetics does have at least some influence in determining the child's outcome.

If acceptance of sperm bank usage becomes too widespread, those couples who choose to have children the customary way, may find their kids competing against others who are smarter, stronger and more beautiful. These children's paternal genes will have survived not only the banks 88 percent weed-out rate, but also the mothers' selectivity.

Prospective donors should also consider that they may one day want to see their children, or wonder how they're doing. This information will probably not be available.

Since the outcome is irreversible, the decision to become a donor is a very serious one. ALL factors, not just the positive ones, should be considered.

Jeff J. Link '91

### Not all scientists stuck in lab dungeons

EDITOR:

Give science a chance, Ags. Don Atkinson's Battalion cartoon (Jan.30) about dungeon-bound science

students confined to laboratory basements reminds me of a few sunless afternoons in physics labs. Unfortunately, the cartoon also perpetuates the image of science as a cloistered activity undertaken by introverts who never come home for dinner and forget their kids' birthdays.

The stereotype of the scientist as a social recluse concerned only with test tubes and equations is out of tune with the times. And it is a sad fact that this country desperately needs to retain or regain leadership in global markets.

Students interested in science and mathematics should know that modern science careers offer great intellectual and ethical challenges and satisfactions. In many cases, the challenges are in the forefront of social concern; e.g. AIDS research and the threat of global warming, to name just two obvious ones.

It is true that a scientist can work in isolation, just as a writer or an accountant can, but scientists often pursue their interests under intense public scrutiny and with social concerns foremost in mind. For example, there is considerable controversy today concerning the influences of increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the way in which the ocean moderates those influences. These are science problems of great complexity and keen public interest, involving such practical matters as ice-cap melting, global warming and sea level rise. To some extent, the future habitability of our planetary home may depend on how well we come to understand and perhaps alter such climate-related processes. There is plenty of work to keep socially-concerned, extroverted scientists busy.

Texas A&M offers students many ways to explore possible science careers, even ones traditionally pursued at the graduate level. Oceanography, for example, offers only graduate degrees, but undergraduates can test their interests with broad survey courses and more narrowly defined honors courses. Other science curricula offer similar opportunities to "graze." In doing so, students will find that a modern career in science at times can offer essentially unlimited excitement, challenge and responsibility.

The most difficult challenge may be to find the motivation, courage and selfless concern needed to come out of the lab basement and face social issues head-on.

David A. Brooks, Professor  
Department of Oceanography

### A&M needs library more than sports arena

EDITOR:

In Friday's paper, you ran an article dealing with the regents' plans to build another arena to replace G. Rollie White Coliseum. Although sports are an important part of A&M, nobody seems to notice how badly the money is needed elsewhere.

Our library, if you can call it a library, is in a pitiful condition. Out of the top 50 colleges in the nation, A&M ranks last in the quality of their libraries. We spend a fraction of the money that other universities do on their research facilities. I think it is embarrassing that a school the size of A&M cares so little about our educational resources. For a school so proud of its standard of education and the quality of its students, we seem to be doing very little to improve our educational facilities.

Granted, sports are an important part of our school, but the University is here for education first, and I think that the funds for the new arena, if spent to improve our library, could place A&M at the top where it should be instead of in last place.

John Brandley '93

## Students could vote for change

Claude E. Mounce  
Columnist

Recent events in Russia and Eastern Europe remind us that the power to govern rests not with the government, but with the governed. If enough speak out, the government is forced to listen. In democracy, the power belongs to the people, mostly those who vote. Controlling voters is the first step to controlling power.

Aggie students are in a unique position of power in Brazos County.

The county has a population of about 120,000. Aggies make up about 40% of that total. Forty-thousand voters voting as one voice could control most of the elected officials in the county.

Aggies could elect or influence the election of the mayor and council of College Station and Bryan, the Precinct 1 county commissioner, county offices of judge, treasurer, assessor-collector, clerk, attorney, sheriff and various constables and justices of the peace.

This poll power includes not only voting for those candidates officially running for office, but also students who could be elected to these offices in a write-in campaign.

In order to vote, a student needs to register 30 days before the election. The first election is March 13.

Unfortunately, this is during spring break; but remember, absentee voting

### Forty-thousand Aggies voting as one voice could control most of the elected officials in the county

counts just as much as regular voting. If registration and voting is too much of a hassle, there are other ways to exert influence.

Letters and phone calls to your elected officials are effective in instituting change.

Recently a housewife, fed up with the TV programs being seen by her children, began a letter writing campaign that resulted in sponsors making drastic changes in these productions. Just the threat of a boycott of sponsor products produced results.

Similar actions against South African investments and products have produced similar results.

Sometimes elected officials need to be reminded of the concerns of their constituents.

Imagine what would happen if 10,000 students showed up for the public regents' meeting.

Would the city councils of College Station and Bryan notice if 5,000 students attended their weekly meetings?

What would be the reaction at the Commissioners' Court session if a thousand Aggies tried to get seats at the courthouse?

Think it's too much work to get a group of Aggs to do something together. How about the thousands who attend football and basketball games, participate in Elephant Walk, bonfire, Aggie Muster and George Strait concerts?

Your reaction typically might be "The only one voice; how could I possibly have much influence?"

The answer is in one name: Rosa Parks, the black seamstress who refused to go to the back of the bus in Montgomery in 1955.

Claude E. Mounce is a lecturer in the agricultural engineering department.

# U.S. Congress could use improvement

The American system of government must work pretty well, considering how long it has endured. But room for improvement always exists, and the need for improvement of our legislative branch is pretty evident.

One problem is the general lack of ethics among the members of Congress.

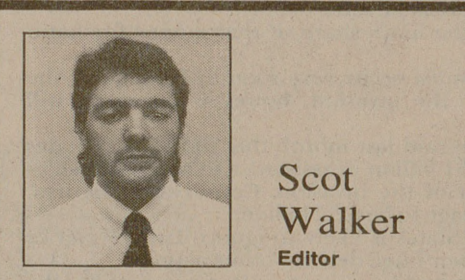
Political columnists and critics have been suggesting for years that Congress enact legislation to put limits on members' outside income.

Finally, in 1989, they managed to come up with a law that did enact some limits. But, sadly, they had to bribe themselves with a monster pay raise to do it.

Another questionable area is the mail and phone privileges that members of Congress have. Every time you get a newsletter or an "update" from Congressman Jones, you paid the postage for it. That's silly, since these mass mailings usually don't amount to anything beyond a notice to convince you to vote the sender back into office come election day.

Of course, members of Congress don't need much help getting reelected anyway.

Every election year, the retention rate for senators and representatives is above 90 percent; most years, it's



Scot Walker  
Editor

around 96 or 97 percent. Congress is essentially a private club—and a very exclusive club at that.

That is by far the biggest problem with the system. Once you're in, you're in.

You can do pretty much as you please, because you have the name recognition and, more importantly, the contributions from political action committees and national political committees to guarantee your election.

Cruise along for 20 or 30 years, living high on the hog from taxpayers' money, and then retire, to live high on the hog from a government pension funded by taxpayers' money.

A solution to this problem exists: a constitutional amendment that places a limit on the number of years a person can serve in Congress.

This is not any kind of revolutionary idea; it's actually quite common in America's business and academic sectors, where it is more commonly referred to as "up or out."

The Texas A&M tenure system works this way, too. A teacher comes to A&M, is periodically reviewed, and if he has not been granted tenure within a

### Americans have consistently said that they favor a limitation on the number of years a person can serve in Congress.

specified number of years, (usually seven), then he is gone. Of course, that's overly simplified, but that's the basic idea.

It's pretty simple: If you aren't up to the standard that we want in tenured professors, then move aside so we can look for someone who is.

Up or out. Simple. So imagine the same plan for our elected representatives. You are about

to finish, let's say, your third term as a senator from Texas. Because of the new "up or out" amendment, you have a choice: retire to private life (which in itself is not a bad deal; most former politicians do quite well for themselves when they enter the business world), or run for a different office, like governor, president or even city council.

For 50 years, the Gallup organization has been polling Americans about their attitudes about Congress. Over the 50 years of the polls, Americans have consistently said that they favor a limitation on the number of years a person can serve in Congress. In the most recent poll, which came out at the end of January, 70 percent of the respondents favored such a limitation, 28 percent were opposed and 2 percent had no opinion. More specifically, 58 percent favored a 12-year limit.

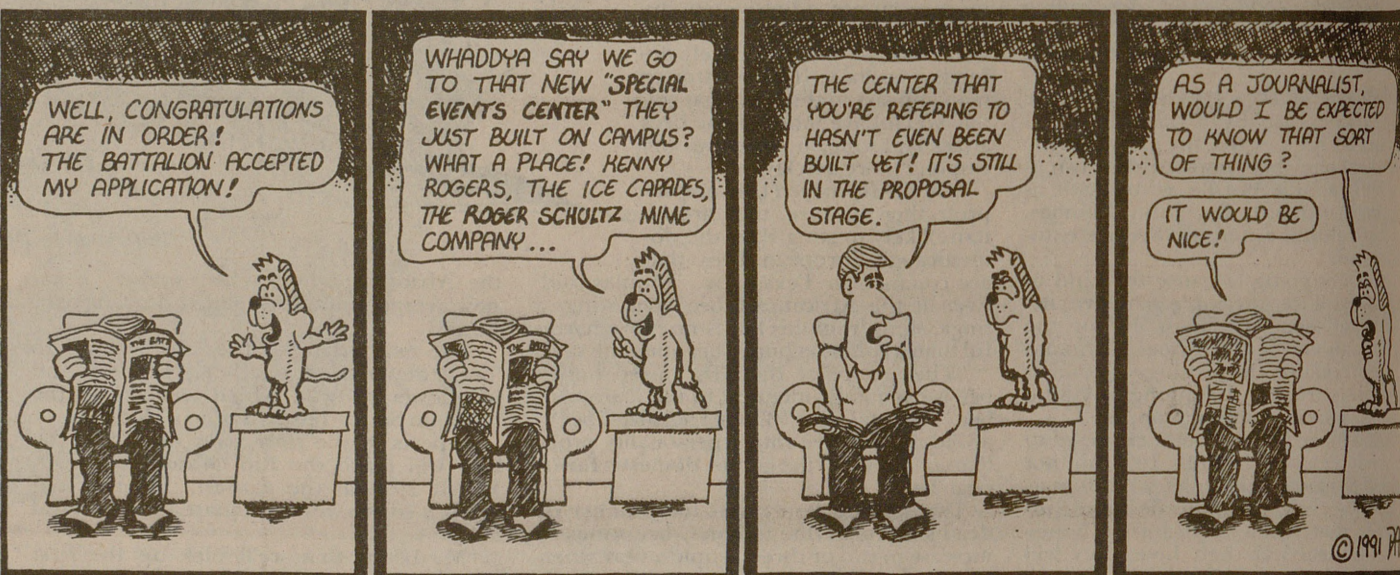
Congress has become a lifetime appointment for its members, and the legislative branch of our government has become an oligarchy.

Fortunately, our system of checks and balances minimizes the impact, but the system could stand a little change.

Scot Walker is a senior journalism major.

## Adventures In Cartooning

by Don Atkinson Jr.



## The Battalion

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