

MAIL CALL

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers and welcomes all letters to the editor. Please include name, classification, address and phone number on all letters. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Because of limited space, shorter letters have a better chance of appearing. There is, however, no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

Education income tax unnecessary

EDITOR:

I find it hard to believe the Texas Student Lobby (consisting of college students who are supposed to be intelligent) couldn't think of anything better to support than a state income tax to alleviate higher education budget woes.

Who pays for such a tax? Mostly the lower-middle and upper-middle class families who don't itemize their federal returns (because they usually don't have home mortgages or other heavy interest debt) and who thus will not take advantage of the deductibility of the state income tax on their returns. The tax will also collect money from the very wealthy (not bad), but will basically ignore the group which sends the most people to college — the middle class. An income tax solely for higher education would be even more regressive than the already regressive sales tax.

The alternative? Double or even triple tuition! Maybe this isn't the most selfish thing to do, but it is, nevertheless, the right thing. Students who can't afford tuition now won't be paying anything extra. Pell grants already cover more than three times current tuition (which is currently among the lowest 10 percent for state schools in the nation).

Instead of an implicitly regressive tax paying for higher education, those who receive the services and benefits of college would pay. Studies indicate that the social returns to a university education are far lower than private returns — the public being taxed is not going to benefit from your college education as much as you are. To put it simply, it's ridiculous for students driving BMWs to be paying less than \$300 a semester in tuition; especially at the expense of the upper-lower and lower-middle classes.

Before anybody rushes to pen an *ad hominem* letter about how I must be a rich snob — I'm not. I pay for all of my educational and living expenses through work, Pell grants and scholarships.

Finally, students like Ty Clevenger and the rest of the Texas Student Lobby, who take it upon themselves to give ignorant and unreasoned opinions to the legislature in the name of all students, must be more careful in the future. Take some time to think about the consequences of your opinions and actions. Try to reason through highly complex issues which demand more than knee-jerk appeals to "hot" solutions, like a state income tax or, equally ridiculous, a student on the board of regents (sometimes, such as in this case, exclusion is more powerful than inclusion).

Most importantly, if you, as student representatives, don't know all relevant information, consult professors here on campus — they are not only valuable resources, they are interested parties.

Brennan Reilly '91

Bicycle article shows bias

EDITOR:

This letter is in response to your April 23 article "Hell on wheels." Could your article have been more biased? I think not. Did you ever consider (with you microscopic specks for brains) the plight of the bicyclists?

When A&M ever put in real bicycling or fitness paths? A line drawn on a poorly paved road does not cut it. Especially when cars/trucks generally drive and park in this so-called "bicycling path." How about ticketing these vehicles? Also, consider that many traffic lights have magnetic sensors which the bicycles cannot always trip.

Don't the University and College Station police departments have something better to do with their time than harass bicyclists? What's next, arresting people for jaywalking or not brushing their teeth? Just because bicyclists shatter A&M and College Station's philosophy centered on the "auto-parking monopoly," don't rag on us because of your lack of vision. Let's put the blame where the blame squarely lies, automobiles. They shouldn't be allowed on campus, no ifs, ands or buts. However, it will never happen, since this is A&M's "secret ocean of free cash."

A&M's motto "... a world-class university" would be much more appropriate if it were changed to something like "... the antithesis of environmentalism, health/fitness and academic freedom." With the publication of such a pathetically biased article, maybe The Battalion would be more suited with a name like "Shangri-La."

Christopher B. Green '91

Library more crucial than sports center

EDITOR:

Bravo! In response to the Battalion Editorial Board's comments (April 26) on the Sterling C. Evans library, I just wanted to say that the library needs an increase in its budget and not a budget cut. If the University needs a new recreational sports center then get the money from somewhere else (like alumni). Don't make the students pay a new fee for something they don't NEED. Sure a new sports center would be nice, but a good library is a necessity.

If this fact isn't enough for the administration, maybe I could appeal to their University pride. Just think of all the Aggies that have to go to that place in Austin to research for papers!

Danny King '94

The Battalion

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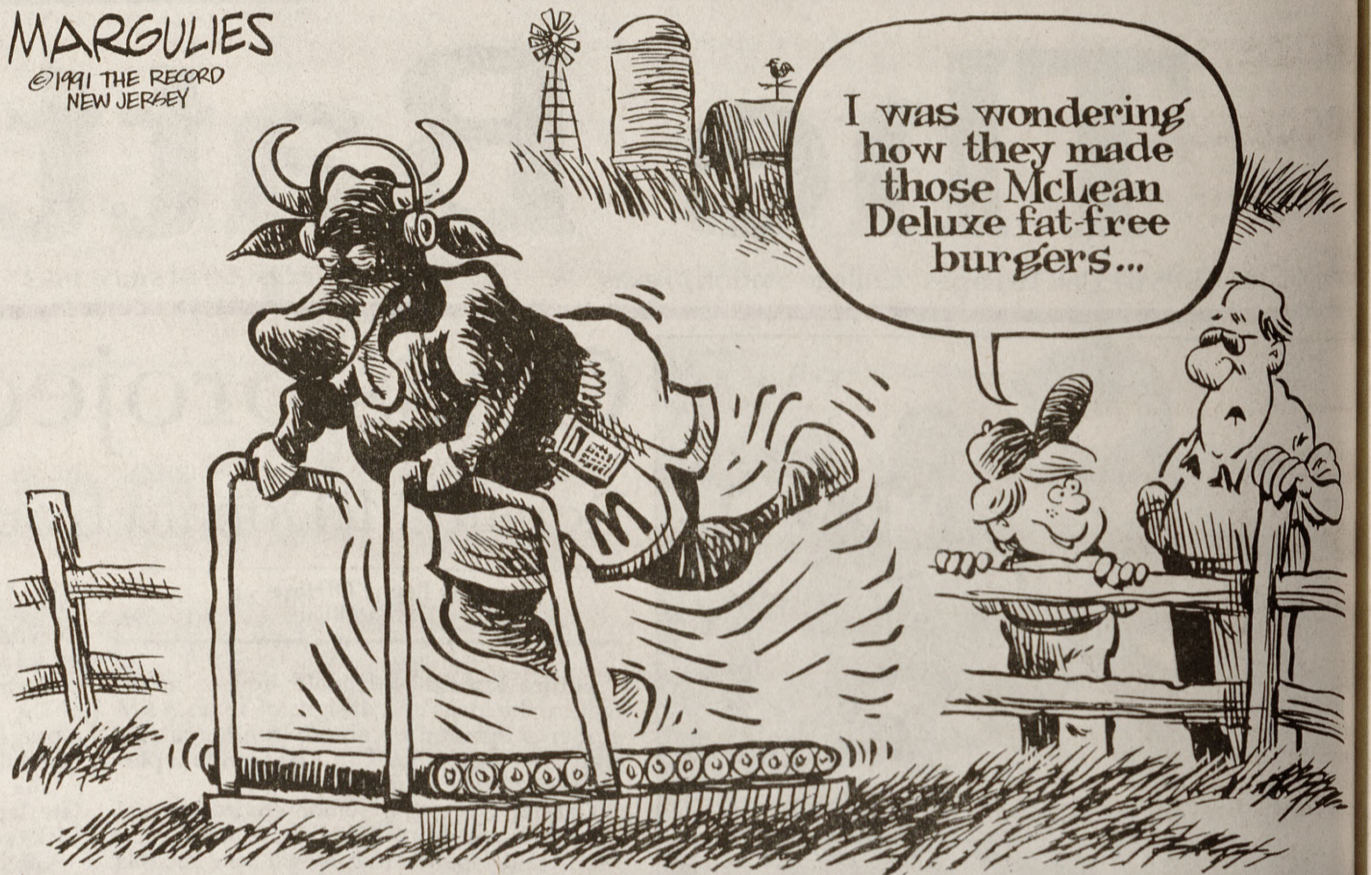
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MARGULIES
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NEW JERSEY

Pornography difficult to define; causes internal, moral conflicts

My philosophy professor recently asked me to define pornography. "No problem," I replied.

The more I thought about it, though, the more mired I became in my own mental mud.

Since I have left the moral restraints of my parents' household, I have made a lot of decisions concerning a lot of different things. I have put a lot of controversial issues into my own little philosophical boxes and arranged them so that I can sleep at night.

One issue that seems to have alluded my boxes, however, is pornography. I don't know of any issues that can create as many philosophical dilemmas as that word. It combines questions of sexual idolatry, sexual domination, free speech, free press, religion and plain old biology.

The problem is that guys love to look at naked ladies. Now, if you are a non-thinking, beer-guzzling, cro-magnon lumberjack, there is no problem. It's the rest of us that are screwed up.

Every time I look at a Playboy or a Hustler, I am overcome by a rush of contradictory feelings. At first I think "yowza!," then I think "Oh my God, I'm degrading all women by thinking this." Then I think "this is giving women unattainable standards of beauty, this stuff should be banned," then "what am I saying? This is a free country. I may not like this, but someone else may think it's art." Then finally, "yowza!!"

So to solve my philosophical

Reagon Clamon

Columnist

problem, I try to nail down a few basic ideals. One: the press should be free. I don't care what Norman Schwarzkopf has to say to the contrary. America is supposed to be founded on liberty and dirty pictures are a form of expression. Silencing a form of expression is not freedom in my book.

Two: women, like all other people, should be treated equally. I think a thorough investigation of the hiring practices of the "porn" industry could be very illuminating. The face of men's magazines would probably change drastically with a few more women behind the lenses in the board rooms.

Three: we all have the ability to control our own lives. If we are offended or moved to chauvinism by these magazines, it's because we've opened the pages with our own hands and had a personality that was easily moved. Just because some bozo read Penthouse Forum and decided to flash a Girl Scout troop doesn't give anyone the right to insult my sanity by forbidding me from reading the same thing.

We hate pornography, that is certain. What's not so certain is what pornography is. Thirty years ago it was Marilyn Monroe topless. Today, it's anything from Robert Mapplethorpe photos to Sheep Owner's Weekly. Pornography is a broad term covering all that is erotic and obscene (another

mystery word).

Prosecutors use the term pornography when describing the very descriptive music of 2 Live Crew. Senators angrily invoke the word when condemning a diversion of budget funds away from military spending and towards the National Endowment for the Arts (although personally, I think the phallic symbolism of the tomahawk cruise missile is positively risqué).

I don't think there really is a viable definition of pornography. Many things arouse, shock, and abuse. Many of these things are supported by the NEA; some can just as easily be seen on "The 700 Club." I just don't think you can call magazines that show women gardening in the nude pornography and ignore all the other sources of erotica and degradation.

Everyone is so confused by their own desires. I guess we all just want to have fun and point the finger at the other guy. If we, as a society, could all learn to be heathens or puritans our troubles would be over. It's our confusion over trying to mix the two that creates most monsters (like Jesse Helms).

Yet we continue to despise in ourselves the very things we enjoy most, such as sex, cheesecake or Andrew Dice Clay. Why doesn't our society look down on the IRS or essay tests — things we don't like. For example, the Cesar Chavez grape boycott — now there was a protest I could get behind. I hate grapes.

Reagon Clamon is a sophomore journalism major.

Religion becomes only campus topic

Dr. Daniel Helminiak

Reader's Opinion

Your report of my lecture on homosexuality in the Bible evidently touched a raw nerve (April 8). I saw only one issue of The Battalion with responding letters, but the trend of the response was clear and all too familiar in the Bible Belt.

The drivel coming from supposedly intelligent and educated university students never ceases to amaze me. Religion must be the only topic on campus that gets a hearing.

This is education? This is honesty? This is attention to evidence? This is commitment to justice? This is a university that aspires to be "world class?" Dale Legan is not embarrassed to admit his lack of personal integrity. Is he close-minded?, he asks. "Highly probable," he answers, and he seems to be proud of it. He's just a content heterosexual looking for a comfortable life. Such an attitude is not even humanly worthy. Yet he claims to be a "Christian." How does religion create such perversion in the name of Christ? Jesus must be blushing if not sobbing.

Both Legan and Mike Miertschin insist the Bible says what it means and means what it says. Then when was the last time they gouged out an eye or cut off a hand that led them to sin?

That's Jesus' literal recommendation. And don't say, "Well, that was just a metaphor." That's my argument.

And if the "You shall not do it" of Leviticus is so absolute, why do they eat lobster and pork, wear shirts of 80 percent cotton and 20 percent polyester, cut their hair at the temples, trim their beards and do a host of other things forbidden by the Bible, read uncritically? And don't say, "Well, that was a different culture." That's my argument.

Miertschin applies to gays Romans 1:32, "they ... are worthy of death." ("Kill a fag for Christ!") Is that what he means? Oh, how exceedingly Christian! This inflammatory reference ignores the long list of sins that precedes that statement, with not one sexual offense on the list. And the "unnatural" of verse 26 — *para phusin* in Greek — does not refer to "Nature and Nature's God." This notion was not yet current in Paul's time. The words mean rather extraordinary, unusual, unexpected

and are even applied to God's doing in Romans 11:24. Surely, then, no ethical wrong can be implied.

Will Miertschin, Legan and their ilk never get the point? No one is denying Paul's inspiration. No one is denying the Bible's inerrance. In fact, it is Paul that I look for guidance. Precisely because of that and committed to personal integrity, I am constrained to ask "What was Paul meaning to say?" The sole issue of debate is how to understand the inspired text correctly. The insistence is this: You must read the Bible against its own historical context. Today's, if you want to know its meanings. Only then can you apply that meaning to today's situation.

Contemporary, historical-critical biblical scholarship offers a consistent, coherent and reasoned approach. The simple-minded, "take it for what it says" approach has to pick and choose switch and turn and scream and shout as it interprets the Bible.

God gave us our minds, evidently so we could use them. Would it be that the Bible quaters soon get the point and devote themselves to building society.

Dr. Daniel A. Helminiak is a professor in Austin.