

EDITORIALS

Watch that accent

Agency fights for different speech

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Friday took a necessary step in curbing discrimination that is likely to grow in coming years.

The commission sued a California audio-visual equipment company saying it discriminated against an employee not because of his race or religion, but because of his accent. The action sets the right tone for workers in the future whose native language may not be English.

The commission charged that Eiki International Inc. violated a little-known federal law when it dismissed Indian-born Rambhai Patel in 1987 from his job as credit manager, allegedly because his accent wasn't good for the company's image. Eiki International has refused comment.

This isn't a case of whether Patel could communicate with his fellow workers. If his English skills were that poor, the company shouldn't have

hired him in the first place. His skills apparently were good enough to get the job and hold it.

While the commission must continue to fight discrimination in the broader areas of race, gender and religion, it cannot allow the smaller cases to fall through the cracks.

EEOC Commissioner Joy Cheria said the number of "accent firings" probably will grow due to increased immigration from non-Western countries.

If companies are allowed to hire and fire on the basis of unique accents, not only immigrants are in danger. Companies could use language as a loophole to discriminate against anyone, including blacks and Hispanics. Even Southerners might be in danger. One "y'all" and you're out of a job.

The EEOC has set the proper precedent for future actions of this nature.

David Duke

Former Klansman has right to run

David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan leader, must be allowed to run for president in the upcoming primaries. Duke, like anyone else born in this nation and over 35, has the right to run for president, regardless of his beliefs, and should not be hindered.

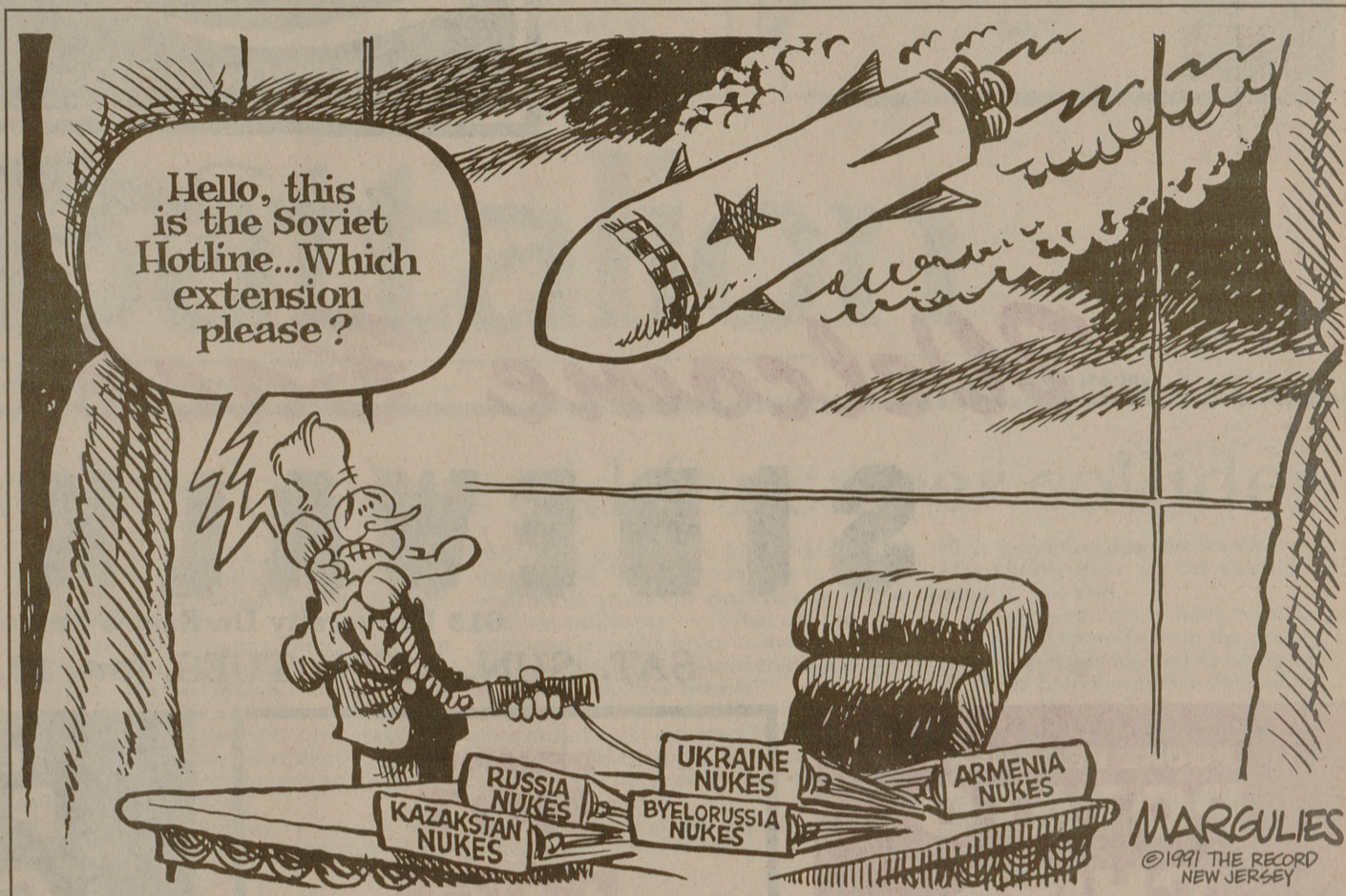
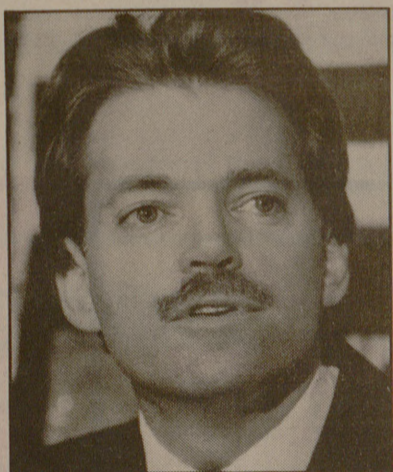
The Republicans do not want him to run on their ticket because they say he is not a Republican. Further, they claim he does not represent the party's ideologies or those of most Republicans. There are others who feel that Duke, because of his background, should not be allowed to run for president. While Duke has not escaped his past image as a racist Nazi, that is unimportant. All Americans have the right to express their beliefs, no matter how far off they are from mainstream thought. After all, this right is laid out in the First Amendment.

In Rhode Island, Georgia and Florida, Duke is being kept off the ballot. The American Civil Liberties Union has filed suit in federal court to force state officials to keep Duke on the ballot. For the ACLU, it is a question of constitutionality and fairness, not of supporting his beliefs.

To refuse someone the right to run for president because of their political views is the ultimate hypocrisy in the land of free speech.

If his opinions really are outside the mainstream of Republican and American opinion, then there is nothing to fear of him winning the presidency. On the other hand, if Duke really is in touch with the thoughts and feelings of many, or even some, Americans, then he must be considered. It is not only unfair, but un-American, not to hear the arguments of a minority.

While we do not support David Duke or his beliefs, we strongly affirm his right to voice them. While we do not support his bid for the presidency, he must be allowed to run.



A cure for national malaise

History shows us no better time to live in US than at the present

An acute case of national malaise has stricken the country, and it's about time we snapped out of it. Things have never been better.

No, this isn't the rantings of some rosy-eyed optimist. As a journalist, I've taken an oath to practice my cynicism until I get it right. Watch future opinion pages for editorials and columns, by me and others, because we plan to take many to task for their decisions and actions. I plan to hear from many irate Aggies, and others, whose feathers we ruffled.

Brian Boney
is an education certification student

But before we begin tearing into well-deserving targets, I've chosen to start the semester on an upbeat note.

Never before in the history of the United States of America has there been a better time to live in this country than right now. I started to think about that over the Christmas break. In fact, Christmas Day was the catalyst.

On that day, the flag of the Soviet Union was lowered from the top of the Kremlin and Mikhail Gorbachev resigned.

The "Evil Empire," so aptly named by Ronald Reagan, ceased to exist. America emerged victorious from a struggle few countries throughout history have overcome or endured. To boil it down into its basic element, freedom triumphed over tyranny. Our

way of life triumphed over their way of life. We won. Our former enemies are trying desperately to become more like us, yet no one seemed to notice.

We were too occupied with recession, crime, unemployment, drug abuse and other depressing news to notice.

My relatives were especially gloomy. They pined for the good ol' days when they were young. (It's interesting how older generations glorify the past at the same time they tell us young-uns how tough their lives were.) They wondered where I'd been when I claimed to prefer this period in history.

Think about it. How many of us would really prefer to live even 40 years ago? Let's look at 1952 and see how great it really was.

War still raged in Korea. By the time it ended a year later, more than 100,000 Americans lay dead. Polio ran unchecked, killing thousands of children. The House Committee on Un-American Activities was gaining speed. This group of politicians, with the blessing of the American people, policed the thought of many of the nation's most brilliant and creative minds. Only 20 percent of high school graduates had the opportunity to attend college. And that's if you were lucky enough to be a white male.

Women essentially had only four career choices: housewife, secretary,

nurse or teacher. If a woman were raped, it was her fault, and most families would cast her out. Conventional wisdom clearly pictured her as inferior to men. Her husband's word was law.

Minorities were legally second-class citizens. Forget about college, unless you were one of an intensely select few. Blacks had to use "colored" bathrooms, water fountains, and other facilities. They were forced to attend separate schools, almost all of which were inferior. None sat at the front of a bus.

Face it. All Americans are better off now than they were just a few decades ago, not just a select few. Of course we haven't completely succeeded in making a perfect country.

But we have tried. We still have many more goals to accomplish. Our government is bankrupt, our schools don't compete with the rest of the world, crime runs rampant, our environment is polluted and AIDS spreads at an alarming rate.

But the power to change the will soon be in our hands. Our generation will make the decisions. We will have control. It will be our turn at the wheel.

We are better educated, less racist and more concerned with improving the world than any generation before us. And those generations accomplished a great deal.

That's why I sleep well at night.

Letters to the Editor

Regent's comments anger professor

What are we to make of the recent comments of Mr. Ross Margraves, Chair of Texas A&M's Board of Regents? As quoted both on KBTX-TV on the evening of January 13, 1992 and in the *Eagle*, Mr. Margraves told the Faculty Senate on January 13 that the Board would not tolerate sexual harassment in the Corps of Cadets (the law gives them little option in that regard), but then added "We're not going to tolerate people out here taking shots at it (the Corps) just to tear it down."

What does this mean? Does this mean that Mr. Margraves and the Board have no tolerance for those in the community who believe that the right of free speech is one of the most sacred missions of a university and is at the core of a viable and healthy democratic society. Does this mean that Mr. Margraves and the Board have no tolerance for debate and open discussion of perceived problems in a public institution? Does it mean that Mr. Margraves and the Board have no use for the First Amendment and, following in the tradition of totalitarian dictatorships, would prefer to

scrap a liberal constitutional tradition and fashion a new order, replete with arbitrary and capricious punishment for those whom the central authority deem incorrigible? Does it mean that Mr. Margraves and the Board still believe that a club born in the tradition of the late 19th century south is beyond open discussion, constructive criticism, and the inevitable force of progress?

It seems incredibly ironic that as the populations of East Europe and the former Soviet Union strive for the fruits of freedom that we take for granted in the West—first and foremost, free speech and free press guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, the bicentennial of which we have just celebrated—the Chair of Texas A&M's Board of Regents seems impelled by some outdated instinct to equate debate and criticism with an intolerable practice requiring in response threats and intimidation.

Mr. Margraves' comments, as quoted, do little to represent the integrity of Texas A&M, suggest an insensitivity to the values of liberal education, reveal a certain lack of vision on the part of the Board of Regents, and expose all too vividly the worst instincts of some who appear to cling to the traditions of a bygone era. These representations, insensitivities, and instinctual reactions are of little value any longer at Texas A&M, but unfortu-

nately even in their marginal existence remain too present and too active for the institutions own good!

John D. Robertson
Professor of Political Science

Student sees how racism endures

Can it be only eight years until the 21st Century? This week I witnessed an event that sent me back at least 30 years into the past. One afternoon a young black man knocked on my door and explained the all-purpose cleaner he was selling. About halfway through his speech, a police car drove into view. The salesman was very personable and tried to sell the cleaner by involving me in conversation. He mentioned that one of my neighbors probably called the police because said neighbor had yelled about his prejudice against blacks and threatened to call the police. I didn't know what to say about this, but the cleaner salesman just blew it off and said he had a permit so it really didn't matter.

I didn't buy the cleaner, but the young man did his job well. About five minutes later, my roommate looked out the window and saw two police cars in front of our house. They had

stopped the salesman and were making sure he was legitimate. He handled the situation well and ended with a smile and a handshake. I just wanted to salute him for his plumb. Please wake up America! Racism is alive and kicking.

Lisa Coston
Class of '94

Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers.

All letters to the editor are welcome.

Letters must be signed and include classification, address and daytime phone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letter will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letter for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee letters will appear.

Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.