

The Battalion Editorial Board

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The following opinions are a consensus of The Battalion opinion staff and senior editors.

No guarantees

Israel has no right to unconditional loans

Last week, Secretary of State James Baker took a hard stance against Israel.

Baker correctly warned Israel it must halt building settlements in the territories it occupies or it would forfeit a possible \$10 billion in loan guarantees.

The United States gives Israel more than \$3 billion a year in aid, more than any other country in the world. That is a questionable practice when the money is so desperately needed here at home. It would be more useful to be spent in this country.

Furthermore, the United States wants to stabilize the situation in the Middle East. In the past several months, the United States has put a considerable effort into bringing Arab and Israeli representatives to Washington to discuss peace.

However, the building of the settlements has become a massive obstacle to allowing the talks to proceed. In fact, Israeli Deputy

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, top aid to Prime Minister Shamir and spokesman at the peace talks, said last Tuesday that Israel will not accept the U.S. proposal to halt Jewish settlements. Netanyahu went on to say that the Israelis would take their cause to the American people.

Yet, President Bush said he would not back down, although it could be politically dangerous to challenge Israel and its influential lobby in the United States.

The Israeli government could convince the U.S. government with its dominating lobby, but convincing the American people is questionable.

The Israeli government should stop building new Jewish settlements at least during the peace talks.

It would only serve their interests better because they would gain \$10 billion in housing loan guarantees and a little respect from the Palestinians at the negotiating table.

Issues

Choose substance over flash

Issues. It's a term that gets thrown around by politicians, activists and constituents alike, especially during an election year. However, the exact definition of the issues, or the important issues, seems to be pushed further and further from the forefront of every election.

It's time that the real issues, those which affect our everyday life and will affect the lives of our children, take their rightful place. We must take it upon ourselves to address the important issues of an election — the environment, education, drugs in our society, competition within and a peaceful coexistence with our global village.

This isn't a bold concept or even a new one. The problem lies in what news actually sells to the reading public. When too much emphasis is placed on who a candidate spends his or her spare time with, what drugs he or she took in the 1960s or what he or she did to avoid going to war, society loses. The American public must begin taking a greater interest in the real issues and quit clamoring to pull the skeletons out of each politician's closet or America will continue to spiral toward becoming a second-rate nation.

The new generation taking its place in the work force must make the dream of an issue-based election a reality. This generation has been

raised amid the turmoil of Watergate, the ineptness of the Carter administration and the complacency of the Reagan years. It has grown up with a general mistrust of government, and it's time that its voice is heard.

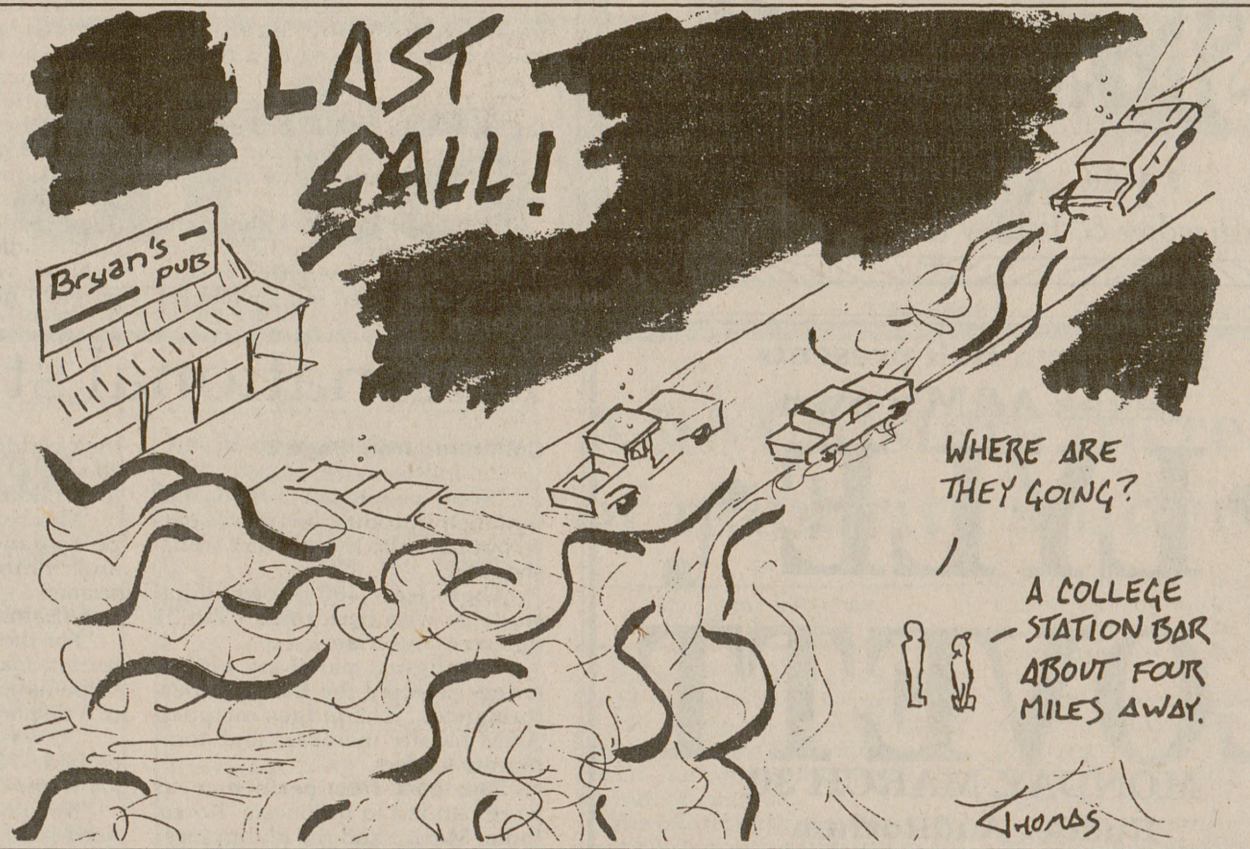
The days of the perpetual incumbent are over. Politicians must realize this and start dealing with issues, or they will feel it at election time.

This is not a matter of Democrats versus Republicans. It is a matter that deals with Americans. It's time for the voters to make their move, acknowledge the fact that our environment is fading away, that our education standards are dismal compared to the rest of the world and that our drug problem is making a mockery of our country.

If we don't stop falling for the mud-slinging tactics which have become commonplace in today's elections, the same mediocre politicians will be re-elected year after year.

The media can push the issues at the public all they want, but it will never make a difference unless that public lends a contemplative ear.

As soon as we stop worrying about politicians' tabloidish ways and start holding them accountable for their views, this nation can look forward to being a viable part of the world community.



Yesterday's war

Journal entry triggers memories of the day America went to war

In the past few days there has been a great deal of attention focused on the event that was Desert Shield/Storm. We have had rallies, protests, news stories and talk shows all discussing various aspects of our short lived, enigmatic war with Saddam Hussein.

All these events have compelled me to push through the cobwebs of my mind and recall what we were like on this campus as events unfolded around us. In doing so, I came across a journal entry I made one desolate day over a year ago.

At the time, I had been chastising myself for not keeping my journal up to date in such tumultuous times. When else, I thought, would it be more important to keep record of my world? Finally, I picked up my pen early one Wednesday morning and kept a running account of my thoughts throughout the day. I would have no idea that the day I chose to pick up the pen would be noteworthy in the annals of this nation's history.

I now share what I wrote on that day because I want everyone to step away from all the hoo-rah long enough to reflect on how they actually felt at the time. What I felt may not be what you felt, but if it makes you remember, then I've accomplished what I set out to do.

Toni Garrard
January 16, 1991
8:42 p.m.

Somehow, I always thought that Vietnam would be the last war before

the last war. I never imagined that I would be a college student standing in the shadow of a massive military movement. I find myself expecting at any moment to be walking across campus or in class when someone announces: "We're at war!" And years from now, just as anyone can tell you where they were the day Kennedy was shot, we will also be able to recite where we were the day our country went to war with Iraq.

Having said all this—and knowing that the likelihood of war is now probable—I have an odd feeling of detachment. War is something my parents and grandparents saw. I've studied it in history books and seen it in countless movies. No way could a child of the "Me decade," of "Reaganomics," of the thawing of the Cold War possibly see my country at war.

Should it actually happen, I believe my first reaction would be shocked disbelief. After all, my generation will live forever.

The feeling, at least among my friends, is that of calm detachment. They—we—all want to be kept up on events and in turn show anger, impatience and great concern. But these emotions surface almost solely because we all know that is what we should be feeling.

It has apparently become my job to keep us informed. A friend asked me calmly this morning if the United States had made any decisive move at the deadline hour last night. I replied I had heard nothing. In reflection, I realize that the exchange was perfunctory at best. The question was asked as if it had originated from a passing thought and any answer would be acceptable. No fear lurked in her voice or mine. I find this self-

evaluation to be almost frightening—at least bothersome.

Perhaps, it is because events are occurring halfway around the world in a country I know almost nothing about and for reasons that no one seems capable of naming with any assurance.

Still, I know that should the worst happen, many lives will be lost. Lives who are all cherished by someone. Shouldn't that realization be enough?

My government instructor started class today by remarking, "What a beautiful day today is. Much too pretty to go to war."

"Amen," I murmured. The boy next to me shifted uncomfortably.

Hours later . . .
I looked up at a friend of mine from my place on the bed. He had just asked me if I wanted to eat with him and another friend. Then, suddenly added: "Toni, did you know we're at war?"

White House Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater: "As of seven o'clock p.m. Eastern Standard time, Operation Desert Storm forces were engaging forces in Kuwait and Iraq."

Where were you, Toni Garrard, when the United States went to war? Sitting on my bed, comfortably reading the Houston Post before I began to read William Blake's "Songs of Innocence and of Experience."

Every exchange now, every question, every thought is startlingly real. My generation, it seems, will not live forever.

Garrard is a sophomore speech communications major

Mail Call

Sullivan misplaces his respect

I am going to attempt undertaking the formidable task of sharing what I think of the 'wide sweeping' generalizations in Michael Sullivan's article of Feb. 21.

The point about the student not willing to give his name for what he purported to believe in is well taken. . . but, really Michael, was that incident enough to arouse such prophetic revelations about "conservatives" (strictly two types) and "nonconservatives"? And what is this respect stuff you are talking about by saying David Duke and Martin Luther King, Jr. in one breath. . . who are you going to start respecting next? . . . Saddam Hussein and Alessandra Mussolini? The point I'm trying to make is that when someone like Rush Limbaugh says something, he has two sides: one is his own personal view and the other, that you and I hear about, is to support the Institution (namely the Republican Party) that he feels is good for all Americans. Taking that one step further, David Duke is an outspoken rabble rouser who sole aim is to pit 'black' against 'white' and that is not in the interest of all Americans or more broadly, does not serve the common good.

And I think the word respect, especially when used by a celebrated columnist such as yourself (a senior English major is going to hit the work

force soon with his deep analysis) should be used in the proper context, i.e. outspoken is not equal to brave and respect(ful). One last thing, I feel compelled to add this disclaimer at the risk of losing(your) respect: Do not tell me to get the hell out of America. . . because I love it, and I can't wait to cast my vote for Paul Tsongas.

Haneef Mohamed
Class of '91

Sullivan's column comes in first

I found Michael Quinn Sullivan's column, "Something to Believe In," to be the most rewarding column I have read since coming to Texas A&M in 1991. As a graduate of an extremely apathetic university, one whose students took pride in not caring, and of a commuter school, one whose students could not take the time to even consider issues, I have been amazed by TAMU students' devotion to their beliefs.

My amazement stems from their lack of understanding. I have routinely overheard "Highway Six runs both ways" or "Bonfire is a waste," yet the people who espouse these opinions seem to be parroting phrases common to their social groups. It seems that each student must choose whether to be conservative(i.e.,

support A&M) or radical(i.e., be opposed to traditions.) There is no room for individuals who are individuals, who seek to create their own understandings.

Michael Sullivan's concluding statement "Don't just say things to fit in or be different. Say things because you believe them" would make a much better axiom for A&M students.

Aleta Best
Ph.D. student

Boney wrong about Gulf War

I read the pro-con argumentation about the continuation of the Gulf War, and I was amazed and upset to see the idealistic "Saddam bashing" arguments.

Not that I like the guy, but I am upset to see how people can have a selective memory and short hindsight. While Saddam the Iraqi was killing his Kurds, Hafez the Syrian was not only killing his own people (at least 20,000 people were killed in Hama in 1982), but also slaughtering the Lebanese in the neighboring Lebanon. Furthermore, a little after Saddam invaded Kuwait, Hafez invaded Lebanon, the Iraqis were defeated while the Syrians were honored for their "contribution" in the coalition.

and the Lebanese had to "thank" their neighbors for their "help". Don't you think that there is much more to it than "justice," "freedom," or whatever?

Please, Mr. Boney, for the sake of those who died, those who still suffer occupations and humiliations, don't be so narrow minded. There is much more to the Middle East politics than you would be able to figure out.

George Naser
Graduate student

Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers.

All letters are welcome. Letters must be signed and must include classification, address and a daytime phone number for verification purposes. They should be 250 words or less. Anonymous letters will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee the letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-2647.