

# Opinion

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The Battalion

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## The Battalion Editorial Board

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



## Back to reality

### Congressional perquisites must go

The House Bank scandal points to a larger problem in our House of Representatives, though. Its members have too many perks.

Congress has yet again found itself in a scandal. This time it is not the exclusive fault of the Republicans or the Democrats. It is the fault of the politicians and the system. And no one is exempt. Even the congressman who represents Texas A&M's district, Jack Fields, has been found to have written some rubber checks.

Congress has shown itself to be not only out of touch with many of their constituents in terms of policy, but also lifestyle. Congressional members are given services ranging from medical care to gasoline, to parking, to franking privileges; all free courtesy of the taxpayer.

The House cannot call itself the people's representatives with a straight face. It is time for Congress to put itself on a more even footing with the rest of the nation. While various legislators and committees have called on America to streamline and buckle down, they themselves have proven unwilling to do so.

At a time when the deficit is soaring over \$3 trillion and Congress is battling Bush over tax increases, the

lawmakers saw no problem in using \$44.7 million in franking privileges last year, \$30 million in the last half alone. It is no coincidence that these mailings were sent out just as campaigning for this year's primaries was starting.

If our elected officials on Capitol Hill had to pay 29 cents per letter they mailed and \$1.15 per gallon of gas they used, they may be less likely to burden the average citizen with escalating rates and taxes.

It is unfair of the people to expect Congress to balance our ailing economy when Congressmen cannot balance their own checkbooks. Of course, Congress has another way around that. Its members give themselves a pay raise.

It is time for Congress, specifically the House of Representatives, to re-examine the perks and privileges its members have so graciously given themselves. It is time for Congress members to quit making excuses and playing with their power as well as the taxpayers money. It is time for Jack Fields and the other members of Congress to get in line with the average citizen — in terms of pay and privilege.

Maybe then they will understand the problems of their constituents.

## No compromise

### State deserves control of its prisons

Texas Attorney General Dan Morales has taken a sensible stance in regard to the negotiations between state officials and lawyers representing inmates in the Ruiz prison-reform lawsuit. Acceptance of a deal supported by Texas Board of Criminal Justice Chairman Selden Hale would result in a permanent injunction setting population caps on Texas prisons and would mean continued federal supervision and management of our prison system.

Adding insult to injury is the inclusion within the compromise of outrageous provisions for inmate prerequisites, such as color televisions. It would be inconceivably unjust to force the same citizens and taxpayers victimized by these criminals to pay for their prison luxuries. Attorney General Morales rightly refused his assent to this criminal-coddling joke of a settlement.

There has been speculation that Morales took his position in order to

make political gains. Some observers seem to think that he is trying to position himself to the right of Gov. Ann Richards on law and order to facilitate a run for the governor's seat in the next election. In this case, such speculation is irrelevant. Morales is doing the right thing, period.

It is true that accepting the out of court settlement of the Ruiz lawsuit would free up prison space in the short term. However, those 2,000 prison beds would hardly be worth the continued federal micromanagement of Texas prisons, caps on inmate populations and acceptance of terms providing amenities for convicts.

It can only be hoped that Gov. Richards will not take Morales' criticism of her appointee, Selden Hale, personally, and that she will instead throw her support behind the attorney general.

It would be far better that Texas take its chances in court than submit to this fundamentally flawed compromise.

## Looking back

### Senior offers perspective from one who's through with school

It hardly seems possible. In only a few short weeks, I will join the rank-and-file of former students. No longer will I be a "college student." I will be a member of society. (Know of any jobs out there? I'm available for the next 40 years.) However, there are certain things I have found to be true during my career at "ATM," and in life in general. Life isn't always as difficult as everyone says, but it usually is. Here they are, take 'em or leave 'em.



Michael Quinn Sullivan

The first, and most important, truth can be found in the Book of John, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will have life everlasting." It is a free, unconditional love, not a love like that exemplified by Tilton, Swaggert and company. All it takes is faith, not money or promises. Just faith.

In a race, in order for there to be a winner there must be a loser. In life, everyone can win, the only ones who lose are those who don't try.

Always strive to be the best at what you do because someone has to be!

And if at first you don't succeed, ask someone for help or else you will just waste your time.

Physics tells us that in nature, energy is neither created nor destroyed and that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Both are true in our lives. What we put in, we get out; whether

it be love, friendship, or even hate.

If you can't look in the mirror and say, "Hey, that's a great person," then you can't expect anyone else too, either.

If you have time to complain, you have time to do something about it! It's funny how we never really get to know ourselves until we do something we're really ashamed of.

If failure is such a great feature, why do we make it such a negative thing?

People say "Don't burn your bridges," but having no escape routes makes for a better life.

And sure, taking the road less traveled can make a lot of difference. But if you don't like what you are doing, and don't believe in yourself, it won't matter if you're on Interstate 45 or FM 105.

Do not judge yourself based on others views. Judge yourself based on your own views.

Greatness is a state of mind, not a state of being.

It doesn't matter what you are, it matters what you think you are.

Just as what "is" is not nearly as important as what people think "is." Before we try to change the world, let's try to change ourselves.

Good luck is looking for a silver needle in a haystack and finding the straws are actually slivers of gold.

Logic tells us a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. But it is more fun, and potentially more rewarding, to jump after the two in bush.

People are born into wealth, status and influence. People are also born into poverty, pain and suffering. Education is the great equalizer.

Education is not there to give the answers to life's many questions, only to give the tools necessary for discovering them.

Physical beauty — or a lack of — can be looked over. Ignorance can not.

It is not always fair to judge people based on their past performance, but if the shoe fits . . .

After my sophomore year, I worked at a local grocery store, carrying out sacks. One day, as I was helping an elderly lady out, we passed an older couple whom she knew. When we were out of earshot she said, "That's so sad, he's only got a few months to live. Cancer." I made some inane comment about how sad it was. She looked at me and said, "Son, let me give you some advice. When you grow old your hair and teeth fall out, your hearing leaves you, your body plays games with your mind and vice versa. It's not fun. And dying isn't any better. But it won't matter if you have lived your life to the fullest. Do what's right, have fun and no regrets."

The more I think about it, the lady was right. Don't I want to say I lived? Do things now while we still can, there may not be a second chance. It was the biggest tip I received all summer.

Be involved. Whether in one activity or many, do something outside of class. Extracurricular activities offer a chance at leadership, learning and, most importantly, relaxation.

Finally, dare to dream. The world is a better place because along the way people said, "But why not do it this way?"

Just something to think about over the weekend.

Sullivan is a senior English major

## Mail Call

### Haitian policy shows our bigotry

The Bush Administration's decision to forcibly send back to Haiti over 15,000 Haitian refugees seeking asylum from their bloody militarist Haitian government is both violent and racist. Unknown thousands of Haitians have been killed, tortured, raped, maimed, terrorized and made homeless by the violent Haitian military ever since it took over in the September 1990 coup. The Bush administration's decision to force these refugees to return to Haiti against their will is a likely death sentence for each of the 15,000 refugees. In fact, those who had been forcibly returned by the U.S. government and have escaped a second time have reported that returnees are systematically persecuted, murdered and tortured. The Bush administration's forcible return of these refugees makes the Statue of Liberty a sham. Perhaps her welcoming of the huddled masses should be changed to say "Tired and hungry? Too bad! We'll only take you if you have enough money and power to make it worthwhile!"

Furthermore, we Americans must ask ourselves how much our brutal treatment of these Haitians has to do with the fact that they happen to be black Latin Americans. What if 15,000 white Canadians had escaped Canada after a military coup and were being held temporarily in Detroit?

Would we as a country or would the Bush administration as a ruling regime simply send these Canadians back to their death? The Bush administration makes us wonder: Should the Statue of Liberty be changed altogether into the Statue of Bigotry?

At the very least, Haitian refugees should be allowed to reside outside of Haiti until the rightful Aristide government can be put back to power in Haiti.

Irwin Tang  
Class of '92

### Get apartheid facts right in editorials

I am writing this letter in response to the Battalion's editorial "Apartheid's End" in the March 24 newspaper. It's wonderful that South African events are justifiably getting press time, but if you're going to print it, get it right.

From July 1990 to May of the following year I was a Rotary exchange student to Ladysmith, Natal, Republic of South Africa. I find fault with the article's use of the word "Afrikaner" for the general white population. In South Africa, approximately 60 percent of the white population speaks Afrikaans. Forty percent speak English as their first language. The Afrikaners-speaking population is the only one that can be legitimately

called Afrikaners. English speakers are termed English even though they have had ancestors living in South Africa virtually since white people first began living there.

My point is that there is considerable animosity between the English-speaking white population and the Afrikaans-speaking white population. They are separate facets of their society. To group all white South Africans together as Afrikaners is unfair and wrong, and both would take offense at it.

To call South Africa one of the most racist and segregated countries in the world is also, I believe, unfair. I know I am courting a backlash, but this is from first hand experience. The number of people I came into contact with in South Africa that encouraged the continuation of apartheid can be counted on one hand.

The article also implied that the Afrikaner militants fear losing power. In reality, those that support apartheid are a minority of even the Afrikaans population. They don't have the power now, so how could they lose it?

F.W. de Klerk is a man with guts. He is attempting to lead his country to a democracy. It will not be easy. But the people of South Africa realize that it must be done. They don't deserve our condemnation. The American media treatment of their situation does.

Erin Marshall  
Class of '95

### 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..