

The Batt: hotbed of liberal Nazis A&M's student paper aims to please ... no, really!

Here begins a new semester of The Battalion, the newspaper that has been described by various readers as either liberal or conservative, communist or fascist.

We are, in the minds of some, slavishly devoted to pinko, left-wing ideology, and in the minds of others, Republican zealots.

This is exactly as it should be. But whatever perceptions our readers form, we hope they stem from reading the editorials that appear here on the opinion page. The text labeled "Editorial" is the only portion of our publication intended to convey the stance of our editorial board on any issue.

We write editorials to contribute to that time-honored tradition of the free and open exchange of ideas, a tradition at the heart of any world-class university. Our constant efforts to seek out the news provide us the necessary information to offer what we hope is an informed and constructive opinion on a given issue.

We understand that everyone will not always agree. Some have even argued that Battalion editorials should reflect the opinions of the student body.

However, publishing only popular opinions would mean publishing that which we do not necessarily believe to be true. The day when truth ceases to be a priority at The Battalion is the day its readers should stop picking it up. After all, if we don't believe what we write, why on Earth should anyone else?

Just as our editorial board writes editorials, our columnists write their columns. Their positions, like ours, do not always coincide with the stances of all our readers. Neither does the editorial board necessarily agree with the content of any column; hence the boxed disclaimer on each day's opinion page.

Last, but in our minds far from least, is the part of the opinion page reserved for our readers — Mail Call. This is your chance to figuratively get up on a soapbox and scream for thousands to hear. Your letters to the editor have made this possibly the most popular section of The Battalion.

But we have to get mail to run Mail Call. We never

seem to receive enough mail over the summer, so if you ever wanted to see your letter in print there's no time like this semester to write one and send it in.

While we hope your ideas as to this newspaper's political identity, whether liberal or conservative, come from the opinion page, we strive constantly to make the news portion of The Battalion as objective as possible. If at any time you do not believe our news coverage to be unbiased, tell us. I am very concerned about maintaining our credibility and I or my managing editor will be more than happy to listen to any complaints or suggestions you might have.

Five English 104 students recently sent us a copy of a research paper they wrote which they said documented the very bias in our news that we seek to avoid. Though I don't know if, as their paper's title suggests, Benito Mussolini would be proud of The Battalion, and though they drew conclusions about personal motives which did not follow from their data, I am glad they sent it in.

If nothing else, such complaints cause us to reexamine our work and to try even harder to keep bias out of our news stories.

The authors of the paper also pointed out one or two technical errors and reminded us that inadvertent mistakes can appear to be examples of conscious bias.

Hopefully the thought that The Battalion is subjected to such scrutiny will keep us on our toes.

In fact, reader feedback is so important that we want to establish a reader's panel to meet with us on a regular basis and tell us what they like or dislike in The Battalion.

If you would be interested in a position on this panel, stop by and fill out a short form. The reader's panel will be open to students, faculty and staff from as many different backgrounds as possible, to give us the most complete picture possible as to reader concerns.

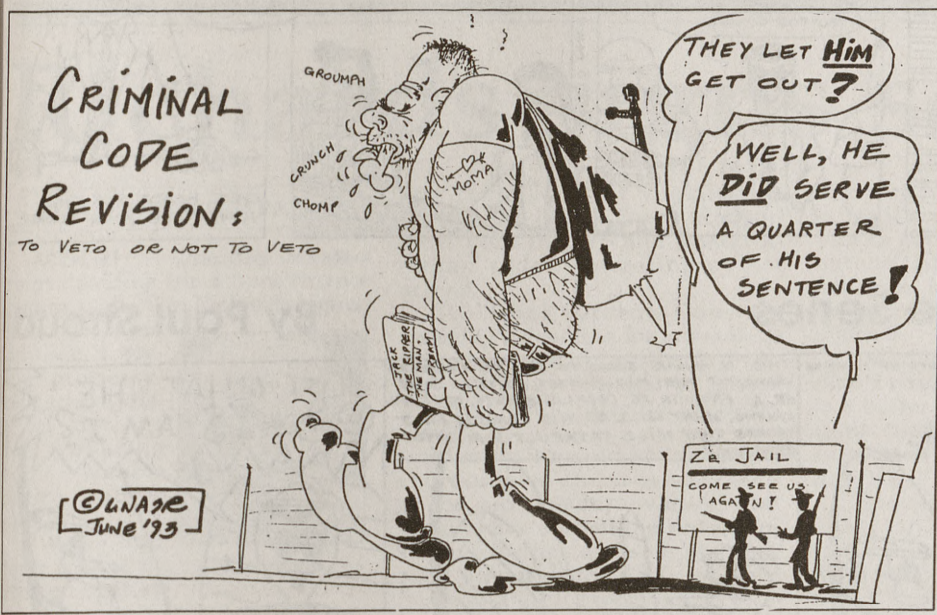
We are proud of what we do here at The Battalion. The collection of C.T.'s, "dead" C.T.'s, non-regs, Greeks, dorm residents, undergraduates, graduate students, liberals and conservatives, males and females and people of all colors that have worked here in the past have pursued the ideals of good journalism, even if those ideals haven't always been attained.

We will do no less.

Loughman is a senior journalism major



JASON LOUGHMAN
Editor in chief



The Battalion Editorial Board

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The Battalion



100 years at
Texas A&M

EDITORIAL

Criminal code revision

Bill needed to keep crooks off streets

The Texas Legislature passed a bill Saturday that would double the prison time for violent criminals. Now, it only needs Gov. Ann Richards' signature.

The bill requires all violent criminals, such as rapists and murderers, to serve at least half of their term, or 30 years, prior to parole. Currently, such criminals must serve only one-fourth of their term before becoming eligible for parole.

"The people of Texas are tired of being raped and robbed and murdered," said Rep. Allen Place, D-Gatesville. "This is the toughest penal code that has been written and the toughest punishment standard (that has) ever been written by the state of Texas."

The House passed the bill 113-11, and the Senate had approved the bill previously.

Yet gay rights activists are calling on Richards to veto the bill because it does not eliminate state law banning sodomy between homosexual couples.

"If Richards does not veto the anti-gay legislation presented to her, she will be supporting hatred and bigotry," said Sonny Hood, spokesman for the Austin Lesbian-Gay Political Caucus.

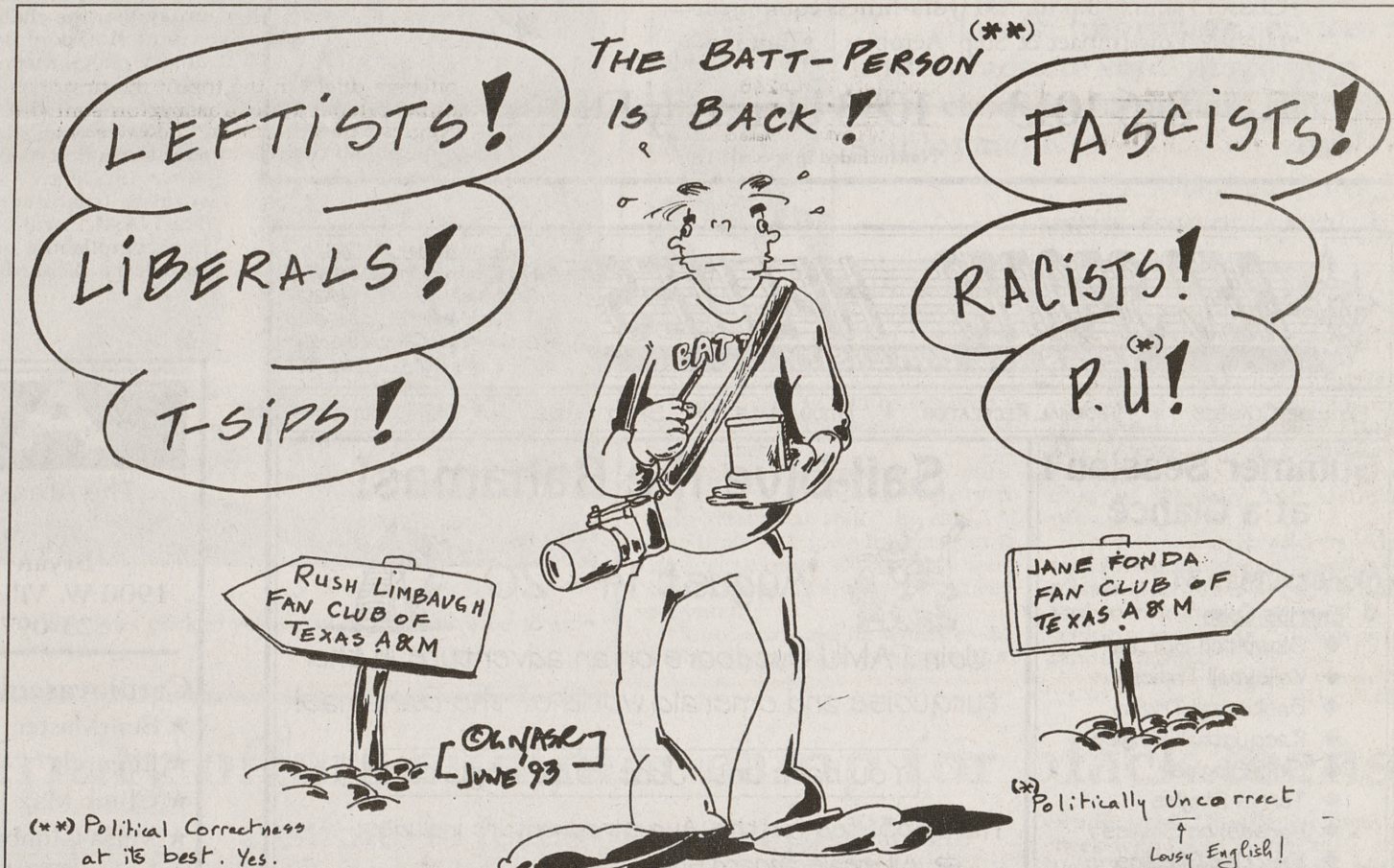
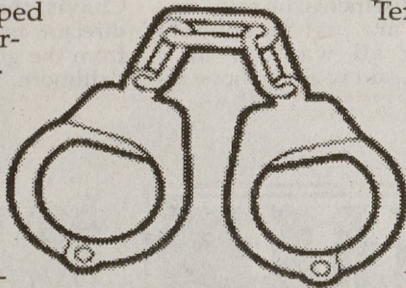
However, Richards should not eliminate the whole bill because of one law. It would be like killing a patient in order to remove a wart. Furthermore, the sodomy law is very rarely enforced and is currently being disputed in the Texas Supreme Court.

Richards should leave the debate about the sodomy law to the judiciary and concentrate on solving the problems of crime plaguing the towns and cities of Texas.

"The penal code is almost a heroic piece of work by the House and Senate and it needs to go through," said Bill Cryer, Richards' press secretary.

The bill includes provisions to: add child molestation to the list of most violent crimes, raise the minimum sentence for capital murder from 35 to 40 years, treat the intentional transmission of AIDS as attempted murder and change the classification of solicitation of a child from a misdemeanor to a felony.

This bill would be a great stride toward ending the perception among would-be criminals of a lenient justice system, providing greater justice for victims and making a safer Texas for us all.



(**) Political Correctness at its best. Yes.

(**) Politically Uncoo rrect
↑
Lousy English!

College Station poverty: lies, damned lies and statistics

According to the Census Bureau, 38 percent of the citizens of College Station are below the poverty threshold, giving College Station the second highest poverty rate in the nation for cities with more than 50,000 in population. This ranking raises interesting questions about official poverty statistics.



MATTHEW DICKERSON
Columnist

The study prompted an editorial in the April-May edition of "The Touchstone," another one of its many efforts to put the "so?" back into social-

I was nonplussed by the editorial's conclusion that poverty rates are affected not by College Station's high percentage of typically low income students, but by A&M's low-level staff, who probably have higher average in-

comes than students. The Touchstone editorial did not discuss: 1) average student income vis-a-vis average low-level staff income, 2) why student concentrations do not affect poverty rates while low-level university staff concentrations do, or 3) why low-level staff salaries affect the poverty rate of College Station in particular but not those of other university cities. In brief, the editorial fails the standard guffaw test.

T. J. Eller, the Census Bureau official who compiled the study, said in a telephone interview that "poverty rates are higher for student populations because student income level is transitory."

That is, students defer higher income into the future, and the deferred income of college students averages \$640,000 of lifetime gain. Ellis candidly acknowledges that the Census Bureau uses a broad yardstick to measure official poverty rates; this results in some anomalous cases like College Station.

A matter rarely discussed when the Census Bureau releases official poverty statistics is what precisely these statistics measure. Studies that compare both income and consumption expen-

ditures show that the lowest fifth of income earners have consumption expenditures three times their income. This calls into question the ability of official poverty statistics to measure actual social welfare.

In 1990, the lowest fifth of income earners, after adjusting for inflation, had greater per capita expenditure than the per capita income of the median household in 1960.

Furthermore, official poverty statistics do not measure much of the money spent on welfare for low-income people. In 1990, welfare funds spent but not measured by the Census Bureau amounted to \$10,499 per poor household, about 2.8 percent of the gross national product.

The lot of the poor has so substantially improved that their average living standards compare well with those in other industrialized nations. The average poor American has twice as much living space as the average Japanese and four times as much as the average Russian.

The poor American now lives and eats better than even most Americans have in this century. Using the stan-

dard poverty measure, nearly 33 percent of Americans in 1947 would be deemed poor. In 1970, the average American home had 0.62 persons per room. This figure for poor households in 1987 was 0.56. In 1989, 40 percent of poor households owned their homes, typically a three-bed room house with a garage and a porch or patio.

There were overall gains during the 1980's, such as personal income and personal disposable income per capita increasing 16.7 and 17.5 percent respectively in inflation adjusted dollars from 1980-90.

The top one, ten, and 50 percent of income earners paid 25.6, 55.8, and 94.4 percent of all taxes in 1990, up from 19, 49.3 and 92.9 percent in 1980.

Unfortunately, most of this is lost on those who swear by high poverty statistics. Their contention seems to be that objections to them amount to blindly believing Rush Limbaugh and engaging in right wing bullying.

The proposed solution replaces "trickle down economics" with the left's "trickle on economics," in which income is redistributed. I suppose the attraction is the simplicity — or better,

the simplifying assumption — of the "solution."

But because society can consume only what it produces in the long run, ultimately any solution for the poor (and the rest of us) that does not encourage employment and increased productivity will probably be fruitless.

Dickerson is a sophomore economics major

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, and Mail Call items express the opinions of the authors. The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows in the Mail Call section. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number. Contact the editor or managing editor for information on submitting guest columns. We reserve the right to edit letters and guest columns for length, style, and accuracy.

Letters should be addressed to: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald / Mail stop 1111 Texas A&M University College Station, TX 77843