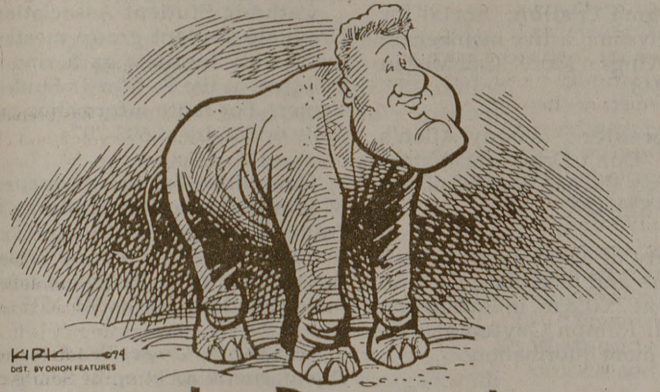


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the New Democrat

EDITORIAL

Abandon ship!

A&M should join Big Eight

The Big Eight has invited A&M, Texas, Baylor and Texas Tech to join their conference. Baylor accepted the offer Wednesday, and if A&M is smart, it will do the same.

The recent collapse of the College Football Association's television arrangement has left conferences scurrying for TV deals past the 1995 football season. But the Big Eight took the initiative Monday and offered a merger that would double these schools' share of the national television market.

By accepting this merger as Baylor has, Texas, A&M and Tech would be abandoning a sinking ship for a major television deal with ABC and ESPN. The other options just don't make sense.

If the Friday deadline passes without the each school accepting, then the Big Eight will most likely make its own deal with ABC and ESPN. That would mean the four SWC schools could join various conferences scattered all over the U.S. Texas and A&M could go to either the Pac-10, Big 10 or SEC, and Tech and Baylor would have to find a new home elsewhere, possibly in the

Western Athletic Conference which has no national television deal of its own. In short, these SWC schools could be in the same position that Rice, TCU, Houston and SMU are in right now by being excluded from the merger talks with the Big Eight.

It would not make sense to travel the globe when we would have much more exciting rivalries in our own backyard. A&M's biggest draw for recruits is its regional status — players get to stay close to home, and parents can easily attend games. Aside from geography, many state legislators would not approve of any plan leaving Tech and Baylor out of Texas and A&M's future plans.

SWC football crowds were at a 31-year low last season, which is a sign that there is not much more life left in the 79-year-old conference. Each school has to make its own decision about its future. But the Big Eight offer could keep the four biggest schools from the SWC in competition with one another in addition to a more competitive future with our neighbors to the north. The time has come.

From land of dreams to land of screams Violence, permissiveness pervades U.S. image abroad



MELISSA MEGLIOLA
Columnist

The Declaration of Independence proclaims for all Americans life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. As a free country, we are the envy of many nations worldwide. We have the freedom to elect our government leaders, own our own businesses and disagree with authority. Our judicial system allows us to seek retribution when we believe we have been wronged and protects us against false accusations. All are unquestionably valid civil rights. But, is it possible that our freedom has gone for a fall?

From the viewpoint of many foreigners, the answer is yes. Our national image no longer is limited to that of a peaceful and prosperous utopia. Today, many foreigners see the United States as a place where people can do whatever they please — and get away with it.

Our country is viewed as a violent and immoral nation. Foreigners no longer envy us. Instead, they are afraid to come here.

On Oct. 17, 1992, when trying to find a Halloween party, Yoshihiro Hattori, a Japanese foreign exchange student, was mistaken for a burglar, shot and killed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Rodney Peairs, the homeowner, fired after Hattori didn't stop after being ordered to "freeze." For weeks later, to help ensure the safety of future travelers to America,

the Japanese media lectured its viewers on the loosely translated version of the word.

In May 1993, Peairs was tried on an indictment of manslaughter and found not guilty. I was traveling in Japan when the case concluded. Every night for over a week the lead story in the Japanese papers covered the trial. The acquittal horrified Japan. In a country that is virtually gun-free, the people could not understand how someone could shoot a 16-year-old boy and face no punitive action.

"Are you always afraid in your country?" young children would ask me. Americans see Hattori as a victim of an unfortunate fatal misunderstanding. Foreigners view him as a victim of a violent, gun-populated society.

But it's not just guns that tarnish our national image. Lately the headlines of major papers have covered Michael Jackson's out-of-court settlement for child abuse, the acquittal of both John and Lorena Bobbitt and of course the decision of the Olympic committee to let Tonya Harding compete in the figure skating competition.

These headlines make news overseas as well. Foreign papers delight in making the United States a model of uncontrollable and immoral behavior. We, in turn, make the process overwhelmingly easy. America is a place where you can molest little boys, abuse or maim your spouse, attempt to incapacitate your competition, hire a lawyer that advertises on television and never face any consequences.

According to T.R. Reid, Tokyo bureau chief of the Washington Post, "The Tonya Harding case has proven irresistible because it seems to confirm all the worst stereotypes that people overseas love to hold about America."

The accomplishments of every American athlete will be overshadowed by the antics of a figure skater who, though never expected to take a medal, now personifies what is perceived to be the American spirit.

Why has this happened? How have isolated cases come to define our national behavior?

In an attempt to give everyone a fair trial and remain true to the fact that in the United States you are innocent until proven guilty, we hold nobody personally responsible for their actions. Suddenly everyone is a victim. Michael Jackson spoke out about the horrible and dehumanizing exams to which he was subjected. If he is innocent, then he is truly a victim. But if he committed the crimes of which he was accused, the humiliation of the exam is irrelevant. We will probably never know the truth.

Bobbitt was said to have "lashed out at the very thing that hurt her." Harding, labeled by Newsweek magazine as "the embattled skater," told Connie Chung that she was abused by her mother. Are dysfunctional families becoming the American norm or simply a quick, easy and difficult to prove excuse for otherwise inexcusable behavior?

Whether Harding had any knowledge of the attack against Nancy Kerrigan or not, she should have pulled herself out of the Olympics and helped to save our national reputation. We, as Americans, need to take responsibility for our actions instead of inventing new ways to pass the buck.

Melissa Megliola is a senior industrial engineering major



McDonald's Bans Smoking

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Banning guns in this culture would be unfair, ineffective

Most of us at A&M grew up right here in the great state of Texas ... the wild West to much of the country and the world. Ours is the state Jim Bowie, Sam Houston and Zachary Taylor proudly defended with guns blazing. The Colt .45 was the favorite weapon of the West.



FRANK STANFORD
Columnist

Over a hundred years later, guns are still blazing, but the famous old revolver has been replaced by the 9mm handgun now becoming the favorite armament of the avenues. Big cities in our state and across the nation have become war zones with handguns galore. The news is full of murders at schools, stray bullets and cold blooded killings,

most committed with the use of handguns. At first glance we might expect to solve this problem with a ban on handguns. After all, this solution seems simple enough; many senseless deaths are caused by handguns, so if we ban them, we'll have fewer senseless deaths. And because pistols aren't necessary for hunting, the sportsmen of America hardly will be affected.

The other prevailing argument is constitutional. We, as citizens, have been given the right to bear arms — including handguns — by the founders of our government. Many Americans have grown accustomed to this right and are quite angry with the thought of losing it. There are more than a few bumper stickers around town attesting to that attitude.

What we have to do here is look carefully at the handgun crime problem, it's subcultural intricacies and the outcome of a possible constitutional amendment.

Most of us are aware of how many guns are picked up in Detroit high schools, or how many Los Angeles seventh-graders

routinely carry firearms. Even Dallas has one of the highest murder rates in the country. Since the media is constantly showing us these stories, why hasn't the entire nation declared pistols the perpetrators of violent crimes and unanimously urged for their containment?

Culture. Where and how a person is brought up has the utmost significance on

Even if pistols are legally unavailable, individuals will have absolutely no trouble acquiring them. Cities will just have drug lords AND gun lords.

this question of gun control. It's a conflict regarding the ideals of the rural versus the urban. For our purposes, anyone who doesn't live in a densely populated area qualifies as rural, and all others are urban. Simply put, rural people, or those with

rural origins, generally understand and appreciate guns — rifles, shotguns, handguns. You name it. This is perhaps due to having places to hunt, or at least access to a farm or ranch where shooting off a few rounds here and there is part of the fun of visiting. Having weapons outside city limits also lends little to the possibility of being hit by a stray bullet from a gang war.

In urban areas, however, there are those who own guns and those who don't. Neither group is very fond of the other. Unlike the more rural families, grandmothers in the Fifth Ward don't have a hundred acres behind the house for shooting. Most of the guns owned in cities are either for crime or for protection from criminals. It's no wonder citizens who don't own guns are very nervous about those who do.

In order to solve this growing handgun problem, some states have implemented waiting period laws which force angry individuals to "cool off" before taking possession of their purchase. Laws for criminal background checks of consumers are in question for many states as well. But

there is still a powerful push for an overall ban on handguns.

No one is in favor of high schools and neighborhoods overflowing with guns or the killing that results, but are we to ban handguns under the presumption that if even one life is saved, the law is worth it? Is this fair to those of us who are responsible owners? No, it is not. It would be just as unfair to ban alcohol, automobiles or procreation because a percentage of people abuse the privilege. Only the abuser should be punished.

Even if pistols are legally unavailable, individuals will have absolutely no trouble acquiring them. Cities will just have drug lords AND gun lords. Just as Prohibition was an abysmal failure at curbing alcohol consumption and the drug war is an expensive joke in the same capacity, the banning of handguns will do nothing but drive the price of such weapons up and create a new criminal element.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy major

COLLEGE STATION, TX
 Feb 24
MAIL CALL
 1994

Hairy situation is bad bull at burger joint

Once upon a time there was a woman who found a job at a new burger joint on Northgate that people don't like because they think it's a mimic of another joint, which it is. She liked the job, but she didn't think her bosses liked her. They gave her funny looks and ignored her while they shared deep business insights in the kitchen. If, during these sessions, she said anything, she was stared at as

though she spoke a foreign language. One day she went to work and found that she hadn't been scheduled. She was surprised, but went ahead and worked for a while. As she left, her manager told her that if she wore shorts to work, she needed to shave her legs. The woman was shocked, because she knew that if anything was scaring customers away, it was the undercooked burgers or cheesy radio advertisements and not her legs. She was very angry and was told that it was an owner's idea. When she called and asked which owner, the manager would not say. Lat-

er that day she found out that the manager had made rude comments about her behind her back. Now the woman was ticked and decided to write a letter. She never went back to the joint again.

This is a true story. I only wish that Aggies, old and new, could have some respect for all the others, even women who choose not to shave from head to toe.

Leah Trice
Class of '95

A&M must appeal to minority interests

Someone once wrote that all that Texas A&M University needs to do, concerning minority enrollment, is to "accept students that meet the University's

entrance requirements period, no exceptions. Look beyond color."

To imply that by gaining more minority students results in gaining unqualified students is ridiculous. There are plenty of minority students across the nation that can attend any institution of higher education on the basis of SAT scores, ACT scores and class rank. But most are not choosing A&M.

Why aren't they choosing Texas A&M University? Take a close look at what kinds of students make up this university. Do the demographics reflect the demographics of the nation or even this state? The answer is no. And why not, since this is one of the nation's better schools? Shouldn't everyone, no matter what race or color, want to come here? The problem is that Texas A&M does not make itself seem appealing to the top minority graduates, therefore not including everyone.

Instead of going on a false assump-

tion that the only way minority enrollment will increase is to lower requirements, maybe we should look around and see what this school has to offer minorities. Then check and see if this school is letting prospective minority students in on the secret. If we are all "created equal," then why not make this an institution that all top students want to attend, therefore increasing minority enrollment.

Nicondra Chargois
Class of '96

Life's little injustices

Hey! Why can't I smoke in my dorm, man?

Eddie Nassar
Class of '96