

Political parties should focus on action, not rhetoric

JOSEPH A. ELCHANAN
Columnist

It seems that in the mud-slinging world of politics, one debate continues to rage in an almost uncontrollable fashion. The debate is over how Americans see themselves and how they define that vision.

Political parties, bracing themselves against the brewing hatred of the citizenry, are vainly attempting to find this answer, while leading and defending attacks from their rivals. One of the most fascinating of these maneuvers is the continuing battle over conservatism and liberalism.

In the Webster's New World Dictionary, we can find the formal English use of these words:

Conservative - tending to preserve established traditions or institutions and to resist or oppose any changes in these.

Liberal - favoring political reforms tending to democracy and personal freedom for the individual.

That was not so horrible to read, was it?

Taking logic in hand (a dangerous thing to do when discussing American politics), one could get confused. For instance, a body could be led to believe that a Republican, who is normally con-

sidered conservative, would back the environmental movement, since it serves to conserve the natural wilderness and would care for minorities who want to conserve their identities. This is, of course, not the case.

Conversely, one would believe that the Democrats, normally considered liberals, would promote more free enterprise initiatives and would never back any group, since all groups would theoretically have the same right to exist as any other. Yet, constant bickering between religious groups and the Democrats show that, again, this is not so.

So why are these titles used?

If an individual was considered a good, decent person, what would be the qualifications? This person would have to be patient and thoughtful, wise and accepting a balance of both conservative action and liberal thought. One without the other would cause a serious imbalance.

Yet, we are being told every day that it is the fault of the opposition that America is in dire straits, that because they are conservative or liberal, we suffer. We all realize that these terms do not strictly define the parties they are referring to. Instead, they are a slight-of-hand trick used by men and women who dare not solve political problems with appropriate action, but with rhetoric.

This unfortunate circumstance makes one tend to

think that blame is both on everyone and no one, because we are so eager to define a person, we are unable to study the situation fully. In other words, the voting public has decided to act liberally and think conservatively — the curse of a democratic nation.

Those seeking office have caught on to the recent wave of contempt people have for those who dare attempt to lead us. America's tolerance for scandal has reached what many are saying are its limits, for the very overheating of our bureaucracy may fuel the violence of our land.

Politicians, quick to adapt, have stopped showing their party affiliation on television advertise-

American public. They keep pulling the same trigger over and over again, hoping that this time it will not blow-up in their face, that there will not be a riot over this policy, or a fatal accident because of another.

The realization that the people and their problems are not static has finally dawned on those who choose to govern. Their definitions of conservatives and liberal are not broad enough or specific enough to satisfy the needs of the voters, who desire knowledge of which candidate is the most competent.

Democrats do not run on words. When Rome came to the point where the Senate's job had fallen from sensible action to constant debate, dictators took the power from the people. We, too, can fall into this trap. It is time for government to redefine itself, while maintaining its promise of freedom to all peoples. Comprehensive and sensible action is needed.

You may not find these people on the ballots this week. And you may feel disappointed that you could not change the government you love so much. But remember today, and remind yourself often that no party can satisfy a person's need for freedom, only their fellow man can.

Elchanan is a senior business management major.

America's tolerance for scandal has reached what many are saying are its limits, for the very overheating of our bureaucracy may fuel the violence of our land.

ments. They have instead focused on the inadequacies of their opponents, rather than their own abilities or strategies for helping our country.

The funny thing is, they realize that they are playing a game of Russian roulette with the

THE BATTALION
Editorial Board

Belinda Blancarte, Editor in chief
Mark Evans, Managing editor
Jenny Magee, Opinion editor
Sterling Hayman, Asst. opinion editor

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, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.

Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

EDITORIAL

NO JUSTIFICATION

SFA homosexual club loses funding

Student government members at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas, have canceled funding of the school's gay and lesbian student association, on the basis that members of the group may be violating the state's sodomy laws.

Although students may be members of the gay student organization, it does not necessarily mean they are engaging in sexual activities, and therefore, the student government is assuming that all members of the organization are engaging in homosexual activities.

Sodomy laws in Texas, make adults of the same gender who consent to have sex a misdemeanor, which is punishable by fine. However, the laws have been on the books for over a 100 years and are not enforced, partially due to the question of privacy.

As it is, this year the group's funding only included a \$106 annual budget. The attempt at a financial cut is only an act of discrimination and is not legitimate.

Should a group be originally funded, then funds should continue as long as there is a demand for the organization. And \$106 is hardly a significant amount of money.

Furthermore, student governments should represent the entire student body, including the 10 percent of homosexuals at Stephen F. Austin, according to an estimate by Keith Roberts, president of the Gay and Lesbian Student organization.

Student governments should not discriminate against organizations on the basis of alleged sexual activities. It is neither their business to question the members actions, or to punish them should such actions occur.

Even if these sexual activities are going on between members of the organization, it is hardly believable that the organization would promote such actions.

The organizations are established to represent the gay and lesbian community, and to promote its acceptance.

Homosexual students have interests which need to be protected. And student governments at all universities and colleges should realize and respect the need for gay organizations as a medium for this group of students to articulate their needs. College is center for education, and students must learn to tolerate each other, regardless of sexual preferences. If they don't, then no one will.



Looks are often deceiving

Convenient classifications often skew perception of groups

ERIN HILL
Columnist

I admit that when I first made arrangements to come to Texas I had cactus plants and cowboy boots on the brain. Sure enough, I met lots of people who perfectly matched the mental image I had of Texas.

When I returned to Minnesota after just one semester at A&M I already had plenty of stories about the strange folk down here; I willingly perpetrated the stereotypes I had encountered before I arrived in the South.

I regaled my friends with descriptions of kickers, demonstrated the two-step and said "fixin'" dozens of times, just for laughs.

"They really do say 'y'all'?" my friends asked, looking at me as if I had just spent several months with a colony of space aliens. Nothing bad happened because of it; the stories were meant to be entertaining and all the stuff I said was true, but I'm not so sure my friends here in Texas would appreciate being lumped together into one monolithic entity.

Not everyone here has a drawl, not everyone works with oil, not everyone likes football and there's nothing wrong with those who do. This is obvious to each of us because we live here. But to those unlucky souls who have never had the opportunity to visit may believe otherwise.

Stereotypes are sneaky that way. They are such durable things that it takes an awful lot of effort to dispel even the most harmless. They are passed along so successfully from generation to generation that one might think they were part of DNA.

Sometimes they can be beneficial. After all, there are so many people living on this planet that we do need ways to classify everyone. Stereotypes can make humanity manageable.

But at the same time, stereotypes are terribly damaging. They shut doors and prevent opportunities. They can even destroy lives. Why do they persist then, if they can cause so much harm?

Dr. Vincent Perez, a professor in the English Department who teaches "American Ethnic Literature" answers that question, "Stereotypes protect us from effort and fear. Thinking is hard, unpredictability is scary. Stereotypes make things predictable."

They make things easier. But life isn't meant to be easy. With life comes responsibility to help better humanity, even if that only means treating people as humans instead

of caricatures.

Dr. Perez said that overcoming stereotypes is a heavy burden. It takes effort to move out of a world of stereotypes into one where judgment is reserved until empirical evidence is accumulated.

"Stereotypes failing means lots of questions and thinking in different ways," he said. As we move into a new century we had better start thinking in different ways.

One such issue that requires us to abandon even our most near and dear stereotypes is immigration. In some states, where immigration rates are high there is growing alarm and anti-immigrant sentiment, Texas being one of those.

We fear that they are sucking us dry, right? Well they aren't. Susan Martin, Executive Director of the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform said that immigration actually has little effect on the economy as a whole; there are too few immigrants to "influence national trends."

"Some economists see immigration as a net benefit [even] ... immigrants pay taxes, use services in moderation, spur business development through their own entrepreneurial behavior, maintain industries that might otherwise move overseas in search of lower-cost labor and undertake jobs that U.S. workers find undesirable," Martin said.

Chang-Lin Tien, the chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, immigrated here from China 38 years ago but still feels like an outsider at times.

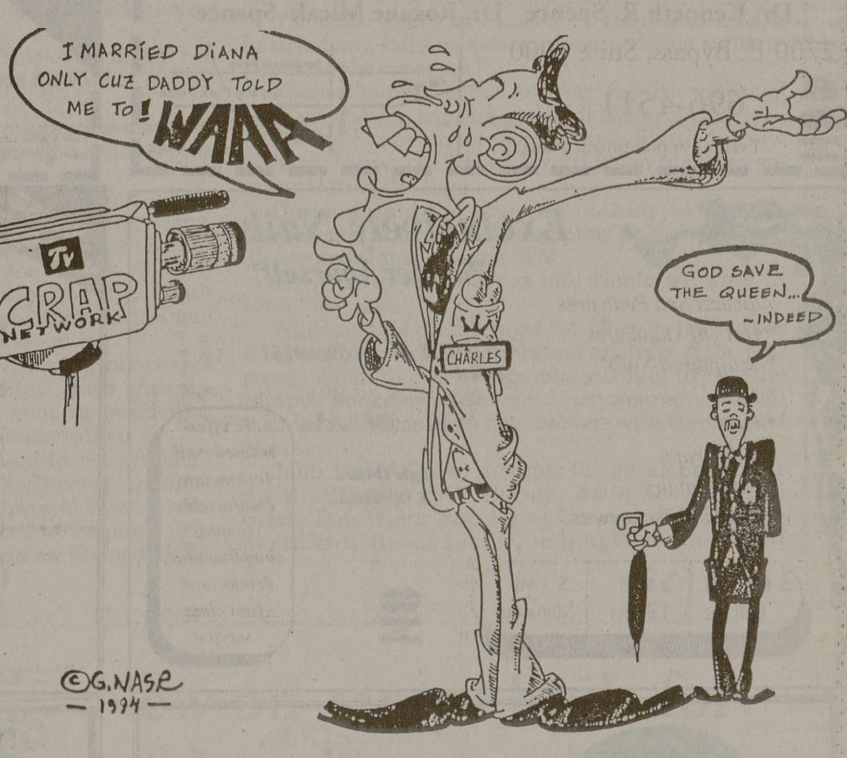
"No matter the scope of my accomplishments, when many Americans see my face and hear my Chinese accent, they think of me as an immigrant, first and foremost ... a threat to a cohesive society," Tien said.

This is where we must start changing. There's no better place to start than here at A&M. We have had some problems with cultural sensitivity in the past but that doesn't mean we can't improve. With 43,000 students representing nearly every corner of the earth, we are guaranteed interaction with people different from ourselves daily.

When you interact, try to think of people as human beings. Don't make assumptions. Don't stereotype. If it feels scary not to think of yourself as superior, don't give up. "If there is a nation that promises to be a model for how to make diversity work, it is the United States... This is a nation that has taken pride not in its homogeneity, but in its immigrant heritage," Tien said.

Let's hope so.

Erin Hill is a senior English major



MAIL CALL

Aggie fan has undying admiration for team

Texas A&M has been the best so far

even though they have not had Greg Hill this year. They're 6-0 since beating Baylor's defensive team 41-26. They also got a good start by beating the OU Sooners, but the thing we're waiting for is the big game at Memorial Stadium in Austin, Texas on Nov. 5 vs. the Texas Longhorns. Last year we beat them on Thanksgiving at Kyle Field.

Although it was good for the Longhorns to beat OU, it wasn't good for the Longhorns to lose to Rice 19-17. In 14 days the Aggies will play Texas, and hopefully the Aggies will win. The Aggies are ranked #6 in the country, while

we lost to Florida State 10-2.

Greg Hill didn't go for over 1000 yards last year, but went for more than me and my dad could. The Aggies are the best team I've ever known of in College Football. The Aggies are also my favorite team. There is a guy in my class who is going to go for the Longhorns on Nov. 5. My teacher is a big Aggie fan, also. She and her husband have gone to lots of the Aggie games. I'll be listening to the Aggies, so do good.

This letter was written by an 8-year-old Aggie football fan with a

little help and editing from Dad.

Ricky Dickson
"Future Aggie"
Jeff Dickson
Class of '94

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy.

Address letters to:
The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu