

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

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EDITORIAL

CAPPING CRIME

The University and its students should work to promote safety.

Texas A&M has always been considered to be a relatively safe campus. Traits such as the all-male, military history and its seclusion in a small urban area have contributed to low crime rates, but crime is far from absent.

After two rapes on campus in the last semester, Jan. 30 near Olsen Field and May 4 at Research Park, personal safety can no longer be taken for granted.

With last semester's rape in the Olsen Field parking lot and the recent one on May 4 at Research park, it has become clear that personal safety can no longer be taken for granted. Both metaphorically and physically, dark, unsafe places exist on this campus.

Students and faculty should take care to find out what marks an individual to various assailants as an "easy victim."

Crime prevention groups list many general safety tips: talk to an assailant in order to reveal yourself as another hu-

man being, rather than just an object; remain as calm as possible so any avenue of escape can be taken; and fight back with a plan — aim for sensitive areas of the attacker's body and make the first blow count.

Apart from individual self-protection, this University could take some positive steps to protect its students. Additions such as better lighting in remote places such as Olsen Field and Research Park and more University Police patrols could make things more difficult for potential criminals.

Another suggestion is the construction of a well-lit path to and from distant parking lots and dorm areas.

This University has a responsibility to protect the students who support it. But, even the most comprehensive campus security system cannot protect students who do not take care of their own safety.

Should prisons use chain gangs?

The chain gangs are back. After a 30-year absence, the state of Alabama has re-instituted the practice of chaining groups of prisoners together while they perform labor outside of the prison facilities. This came about because of a campaign pledge Gov. Fob James to take a somewhat less-compassionate attitude toward criminals.

According to a recent article in the New York Times, Alabama Prison Commissioner Ron Jones, known for his tough stance on criminals, has directed a northern Alabama correctional facility housing 400 inmates to begin shackling prisoners working on the roadsides with leg irons.

Only non-violent repeat offenders will be candidates for this duty. In other words, it treats those who go in and out of the prison system as if they were on a merry-go-round.

This duty will last for approximately three months and will consist of 12-hour days of hard labor.

Well, it is about time. After reading and hearing stories in the media about the frivolous comforts being accorded to those who violate the standards of decency and order in society, the time is well overdue for prisoners to once again start associating their loss of freedom with severe discomfort.

Once upon a time, prison was a very harsh and altogether unpleasant experience. People did not look forward to cable access and satin pillows. It was a difficult time, and one's civil rights were not priorities.

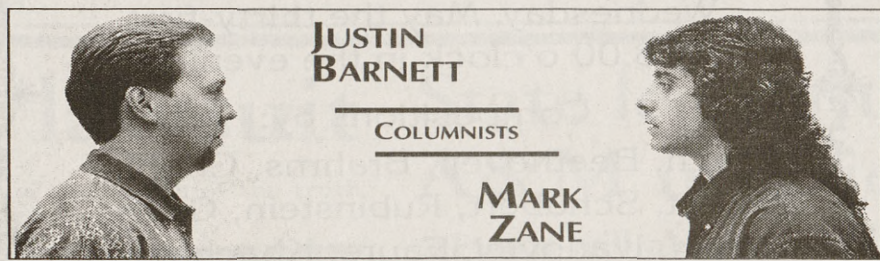
The worthless dregs who will get to enjoy life in chains can look forward to long, hard days and ample scorn and derision from citizens who pass them by as they toil on the roadside. That image is as American as apple pie.

Unfortunately, the criminals do have one thing on their side. It is an insidious organization known as the ACLU. That is "All Communist Lawyers Unite," for those of you who think gun control is the answer.

Alvin J. Bronstein, executive director of the National Prison Project of ACLU, has taken umbrage with Alabama's new commitment to positive rehabilitation. He believes that shackling men together causes them to lose touch with their humanity.

Mr. Bronstein is the one who has lost touch — with all common sense and reason, that is. But that is to be expected of most anyone affiliated with the ACLU.

The organization is so skewed that it would probably go to court in order to protect the "civil liber-



JUSTIN BARNETT

COLUMNISTS

MARK ZANE

ties" of a pedophile who was denied a croissant for breakfast. Who asked these kooks for their input?

Our prisons were running along just fine until someone got the absurd notion that society should not treat its undesirables so unkindly.

Great. We put our lives at risk because some sociologist told us to look at the root causes and not punish the lawbreakers.

If only academics would stick to writing esoteric monographs that no one reads and keep their nose out of practical matters.

The last thing we need at this time is to give any attention to a bunch of worn-out '60s liberals — read "academics" —

still looking for a cause. So they care about human rights?

My only question is, did Ted Bundy care before he brutally slaughtered his victims? No. Therefore, I do not care if some jailbird breaks a sweat while picking up litter.

The chain gang is a time-honored tradition that should be continued.

While it may not solve every problem or rehabilitate every offender, it will at least provide a labor pool to perform the dirty jobs no one else wants.

Convicted criminals do not have the right to luxury or comfort. They have chosen, of their own free will, to disregard the rules and laws to which the majority of society abides.

Whether or not they enjoy forced labor is irrelevant.

The last time I checked, they were not a strong voting bloc. So congratulations to Alabama's governor for bringing back the antiquated concept that prison is a punishment, not a pleasure cruise.

If only more of our leaders had the intestinal fortitude to make difficult changes in the status quo, then perhaps we could stop fretting about the crime problem and actually begin to make real changes.

Justin Barnett is a senior English major

My distinguished colleague seems to believe that shackling men together by their ankles is the answer to lowering the number of repeat offenders. Unfortunately, he and the governor of Alabama have forgotten that chain gangs did not deter repeat offenders in the past, and there is no proof that it will magically work today. If this technique worked previously, it would never have disappeared.

Gov. James made a promise to the voters in Alabama in his November election campaign that he would be tough on crime and would change the current prison system. Appointing Ron Jones, a man known for his harsh treatment of prisoners, was a feeble way of keeping his promise. Resurrecting the chain gang is just another step back to the so-called "good old days."

I am not against prisoners working, but the chain gang is a bit primitive. The only jobs the prisoners will conduct is cutting and trimming the brush along the roadsides and picking

up litter in ditches. How much trash needs to be collected?

Gov. James talks big, but would he want to be a prison guard that might have to deal with a prisoner rebellion?

Shackling prisoners is very degrading. Many inmates may respond to such degradation with violence, and riots could ensue.

The state of Alabama is sadly mistaken if it believes that shackles will prevent such occurrences.

Many of our hard-nosed conservatives fail to consider the dangers that prison guards face everyday. Many people do not realize that "fringe" benefits such as cable television and decent food are more for the benefit of the prison staff

rather than the comfort of the prisoners. Content prisoners are better behaved inmates, and behavior increases their chances for rehabilitation.

It seems to have been forgotten that prisoners are human beings. Putting men on chain gangs is society's way of telling them that they are animals. These prisoners will eventually lose touch with humanity, even if they are only on the chain gangs for three months. This will lead to little chance for rehabilitation.

In fact, rehabilitation of prisoners, which is supposed to be the dominant objective of prisons, has been forgotten in Alabama. The main focus is deterring future crime.

This also is an important objective of prisons, but is robbing men of their humanity and dignity the answer?

Mr. Jones has ordered 300 pairs of chains totalling \$17,000. He states that this will save money in the long run, because every time a car passes and a child looks out at the prisoners, it will reinforce the idea that crime has consequences.

I did not realize that the average child can make such logical deductions.

Of course children will say that they will never break the law, use drugs or do anything that is wrong. What happens, however, when they grow up and forget their childhood promises?

The rhetoric of my colleague is typical of the recent wave of conservative crime-stoppers. "Let's build more prisons, have longer sentences, more capital punishment, etc."

Yet, with all this increased spending on the penal system, our conservative brethren will somehow magically eliminate the budget deficit and lower taxes at the same time.

Does anybody think of the long-term anymore?

Has it occurred to our leaders that perhaps if 95 percent of America's wealth was in more than the hands of 5 percent of the population we might have a better-balanced society and have happier communities, which would result in lowered crime rates.

Imagine that. All this, and we will not have to put more money into our prisons.

I apologize to my colleague for sounding too much like a sociologist.

Mark Zane is a sociology graduate student



MAIL CALL

The Battalion guest column policy

Students and faculty of Texas A&M University are always welcome to submit guest columns to be considered for publication on the Opinion page.

Guest columns serve as a form of input from The Battalion's readers on a variety of different issues and topics.

Guest columns are between 700 and 750 words in length.

If you are interested in submitting a guest column on any topic, please contact The Battalion Opinion editor at 845-3312.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit guest columns for style, length, clarity, accuracy and punctuation. Guest column submissions will be accepted throughout the semester, and as many as possible will be printed.

Clinton, Democrats continue to waffle on balancing budget

Most of us spend our breaks trying everything in our power to do nothing. For example, I have worked my tail off over the past week to make sure that I did not get out of bed until after noon.

I am very proud to declare success.

Others in the country wanted to use the break to try to do ... something. This would include our beloved President. In an effort to overcome his label of "irrelevant," Clinton decided to take a radical, far-reaching course destined to change the world as we know it.

He threatened a veto (screams, women fainting, men glaring with disapproval, children having nightmares).

For those of you who spent your break avoiding politics — I should have — here is the story. Pay attention, because this won't make much sense.

It all started when Bill Clinton pulled the ultimate cop-out. Instead of making any kind of an effort to balance the budget, he sent Congress a disgusting plan that actually increased spending by \$200 billion.

Clinton's budget was so bad that, when put to a vote in the Senate, it went down 99-0. Not even a Democrat would be caught dead voting for

DAVID TAYLOR
COLUMNIST



Clinton's lame ideas. Now it's normal for the President's budget to be defeated when Congress is controlled by the opposition party, but even during the '80s no budget was this unpopular.

Well, next thing you know it was damage control time. Robert Reich, Clinton's secretary of labor showed up on a Sunday morning talk show and declared that it has never been the administration's policy to balance the budget.

And by the way, if the Republicans are so smart, why don't they try to do it? (sneaky laugh here)

Meanwhile, as Reich's buddies were all high-fives and "we sure showed them," the Republicans balanced the budget.

Oops! Next thing you know, Leon Panetta, Clinton's chief of staff, appeared on a Sunday morning talk show and announces that it has always been this administration's policy to balance the budget, just not right now. And anyway, it's not a great idea to try to balance the budget in seven years — as the Republican plan does — because it's not good policy.

Uh-huh, and Joey Buttafuoco is just a good guy who keeps getting caught in bad situations. So the President decided to do an interview

with a Northeastern public radio station, and he declared that, sure, Congress could balance the budget in seven years, and it might not be bad policy.

Oh. Meanwhile, back in Congress, all the Democratic leadership could do was declare, "Death to the Capitalist" and "Workers of the world unite!" Actually, that is not all they were doing.

Every time the Republicans cut a program, the Democrats would scream, "We can't cut that!" And they are right: They can't cut anything ex-

The spending cuts Clinton wants to veto will have to be paid for by our generation. The funding for these programs will come out of our pockets.

cept a draft card.

That's the reason the Democrats are not in power anymore.

I can't claim to agree with everything the Republicans do in Congress, but at least they are doing something. Prior to the elections last year, hundreds of Republican candidates asked voters to watch and see what would happen if they were elected.

In almost every case, the Republicans did, or

tried to do, everything they promised. For the Democrats, it's just been business as usual, and they hope the voters haven't noticed.

Well I have noticed. And I doubt I am the only one. I grew up in the '80s, watching Democrats say whatever they wanted to get elected to Congress and then do whatever they wanted once they got there.

This is a welcome change.

This is our future that is being played with. The spending cuts Clinton wants to veto will have to be paid for by our generation. The funding for these programs that "we just can't cut" will come out of our pockets.

If we don't keep a close watch on our elected officials, these cuts could easily grind to a halt.

Our ignorance is the Democrats' best friend.

By the way, remember that veto threatened by the President? When asked why he wanted to exercise his veto — over a \$16.4 billion spending cut — he answered, "We just can't cut that."

If the President keeps this up, come November, I'm going to have to find another job because the entire government is going to end up Republican.

At least I know I have a skill, though. Does anyone know a job with a requirement to sleep past noon everyday?

David Taylor is a senior management major

THE BATTALION

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