Monday September 4, 1995

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THE BATTALION OPINION

The sad state of student activism

The voice of protest at A&M is hoarse compared to other universities

CHRIS

STIDVENT

COLUMNIST

Tmagine the half-crazed guerrilla leader, eyes oodshot and full of rage, taking his stance in front of the MSC

"Now is the time for us to unite! The moment is ripe for our brothers-in-arms to take back this campus! We will begin by ... Wait, everybody! Come back here and listen!"

While reading through a recent article detailing the Top 10 Activist Campuses in the nation, I wasn't too surprised to discover that Texas A&M didn't quite make the list.

We Aggies couldn't keep company with the likes of the University of Ottawa student body, who recently threw eggs and macaroni at a government official to protest rollbacks in financial support for their institution. Our actions fall far short of the hunger

strike began by some students at the University of Colorado as a way of protesting curriculum they did not find ethnically diverse enough

Regrettably, it appears that our University security officials haven't had a need for tear gas, the National Guard or fire hoses at all in the last few years

Crowd control measures of these large and frightening magnitudes have not been necessary — mainly because there haven't been any crowds to control.

I never noticed anybody setting themselves on fire out in front of the Academic Building to protest the Gulf War.

I doubt anybody even took a cigarette lighter to their backpack when we invaded So-

As far as I know, nobody lobbed a Molotov ocktail against the walls of the Systems Building this weekend to protest the Board of Regents' recent decision to table the student liaison proposal.

I hesitate to use the word "apathetic," but our students are rather complacent when it

comes to reacting to national and local events that have any significant impact on their lives. -----Truthfully, this fact shouldn't

strike anybody as being too surprising. Our campus is one attended

largely by the same type of students. And, as some may have noticed, white Republican Chris-

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tians at a tradition-laden University aren't all that adept at raising a little hell. One might wonder where the danger 5 5

lies in having such a conformist, homogeneous student body. It's wonderful that we STOP all work and play so WORLD

HUNGER well with others. But, when this incredible pressure to

think alike and go with the flow does rear its head from time to time, it usually isn't a pretty sight.

Phil Gramm kicked off his presidential campaign last April with a political rally on our campus

The Ross Volunteers, the Aggie Band and several higher-level University administrative officials were part of the hoopla surrounding the event.

The whole thing ran dangerously close to appearing as if a state-funded school was giving an official endorsement to the ideology of one political party. Hey, Democrats pay taxes, too.

This was the same event where members of the College Republicans felt comfortable enough to accost potential protesters and confiscate or block any signs that they might be holding up

Hell, the First Amendment isn't any match for the overwhelming might of the misguided masses.

But we do deserve some credit for continuing the tradition of spirited and informed debate. Every now and then, we Aggies tend to get fired up about certain gripping issues.

Who doesn't look forward to the annual October batch of Mail Call letters lamenting the death of the word "Howdy" as an official student greeting on our campus and pontificating on what this transformation might mean on a larger scale?

How about the moronic debate that went on last fall over whether a backpack is better worn with one strap or two?

Interestingly enough, this subject became a hot topic around here just

about the time the rest of the FROM Y civilized Western world was debating the political and ethical ramifications of US ABANT military support for the invasion of Haiti

Sometimes our students give the impression that they don't really have that good of a grasp on what is going on around them.

And even if they do have elevated national and social consciences, they don't know how to use the damn things in the first place.

Ours is a University where protest is rare, and it appears that this is so because everybody thinks alike. This may make for a peaceful campus, but it sure does get boring around here from time to time.

I do hold out hope that there is a silent minority out there somewhere, mimeographing articles like "Marxism and Atheism: Your Friends in a Time of Need" on a cheap underground printing press while focusing on taking over the Food Court with an armed rebellion. After a while, all of this sanity can really drive you crazy

> Chris Stidvent is a senior English and philosophy major



Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorials 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.

Rob Clark Editor in Chief **Sterling Hayman Kyle Littlefield Opinion** Editor **Elizabeth Preston** Assistant Opinion Editor

Editorials Board

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EDITORIAL **IGNORED AGAIN**

The decision to table the student liaison proposal was irresponsible.

Last Friday, the Texas have no input. A&M University System Board of Regents showed a complete lack of responsibility by tabling the proposal to create a student liaison on the Board.

Claiming that allowing for a student liaison would

the regents prevented the measure from coming to a vote. And once again, the possibility of gaining a student liaison slipped through the cracks. The Board should

realize that it has become too isolated from the true voice of A&M — the students. Adequate student input is a rarity and sometimes nonexistent.

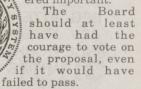
Regardless of whether other groups would seek representation on the Board if a student liaison were allowed, the Regents should have voted on and approved the proposal.

The entire existence of Texas A&M University is because of the students. And far too often, the students posal.

By tabling this proposal and denying it a vote, the Board of Regents is sending the message that the concerns of students is not a great priority

The proposal did not call for the student liaison to prompt too many groups to have voting privileges, only a seek places on the Board, voice.

Apparently, that voice was not considered important.



Instead, the regents merely swept the issue under the rug with the single sweep of their parliamentary broom

Although the student liaison proposal can be brought back to the table whenever its committee chooses to, Board Chairman Mary Nan West said that the issue is pretty much dead.

The A&M Board of Regents should be ashamed of its failure to vote on the proIFUN ANNI

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Political signs on campus say little IBERALS BE-WARE," the yellow signs screamed as WES they stood vigilant outside SWIFT It's open season on liberals now, and the political ASST. CITY head-hunters are out to bag EDITOR

Is this ridiculous, or what?

Sbisa Dining Hall.

a wild left-winger.

I've been on this campus for two years now, and each year it never ceases to amaze me how totally ludicrous some students can be. There's not a street, plaza or courtyard on

the campus where some sign isn't spouting off about how horrible someone else's beliefs are. In my five semesters here, I've seen signs blasting homosexuals, liberals, atheists, agnostics, minorities, conservatives, the NRA



Don't believe me? Just watch television and you'll see what I'm talking about. Every week, I watch Dennis Miller Live on HBO. I love his hu-mor, and I think he's one of the

quickest wits in show business, but he's a prototype soapbox poster-boy for this syndrome. Miller's monologues, especially his zingers about Newt Gingrich, are biting

and scathing, but amazingly void of substance. It's one thing to tell us that the Speaker of the House is a fat pig. It's a completely different thing to tell us

why he's a fat pig. The disease doesn't just afflict the critics of the right. The conservative crusaders have their moments, too. I remember back in high school when some friends of mine would deby scream The GOP! What do we want? Death to liber als!

our system of life, even — is built on compromise. No one is right all the time, and if you think you are, you're wrong.

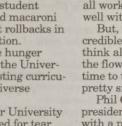
Yes, we need diverse perspectives and different points of view, but more importantly, we need those perspectives to mingle. It is from compromise and interaction that America has gotten its strength, not from mudsling ing and put-downs.

Politicians today have forgotten that. Our leaders today are so hell-bent on sticking to their guns that they end up shooting themselves in the foot. They tell us this is right and that is wrong, and assume that we know why.

Today, studies have shown that one-third of the people in the United States don't know what the abbreviation "FBI" stands for, what country borders the United States to the

north, or why we celebrate July 4. If some people don't know these simple

w can it be expected that they



Christians. It seems that every time look up, someone is sticking up signs telling me that so-and-so is wrong.

You know what, though? The sign-posters never tell you why they're putting up those signs. They never tell you why they're right. They just want you to know the other people are wrong

Liberals beware? The sign should read, "real, intelligent thought beware."

These signs are just a symptom of the American political disease. Americans don't like to explain themselves. Most philosophies seem to say "You should just accept what we tell you and be happy with it.'

It's hard to convince someone that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence: so. in turn, they set the other guy's pasture on fire. It's the American way.

This is not exactly engaging and stimulating conversation. In fact, its a bit near-sighted if you ask me.

So what does this great disease mean? While everyone is busy thinking up the next great one-liner, the political dance floor becomes about as empty as a third grade Sadie Hawkins dance. No one talks, no one compromises and nothing gets done.

And if nothing gets done, society suffers. It still has the same poverty, the same hatred, the same pestilence, the same problems. All this because we're too busy yelling about how horrible the next guy is.

What we need to remember is that our sys-

things, h un derstand the complexities of major social prob-

The bare facts are that most of us don't know squat, and if something isn't explained to us, then we go on blind allegiance or misguided beliefs. When that happens, not only will compromise fail, but the country as well. So, what now?

I challenge those who suffer this Sign-Poster Syndrome to give us more. Don't tell us that they're wrong, show us why you're right. Stop tearing your opponents down and start building yourself up.

Then, let the chips fall where they may. It may not be what you want, but its better than what's been going on — nothing.



"Hit it past the over-grazed plains, around the clear cut forest, beyond the national park mining; and onto the green ... "

Wes Swift is a junior journalism major



Texas A&M should observe Labor Day

The refusal of Texas A&M University to observe Labor Day caught me completely by surprise

It never occurred to me that such a prestigious institution of higher learning would completely ignore one of America's most important federal holidays.

Understandably, I am shocked and disgusted by this University's desecration of the day celebrating the long and hard fought gains and triumphs of America's working men and women.

As we know, America is a nation of immigrants. This land was built on the backs of our black, white, yellow, red or

brown. Every single Aggie has ancestors who toiled under hellish conditions in the fields or in the sweatshops and factories. None of us are too far removed from this experience of extreme exploitation and crass abuse.

Thousands of working men, women and children perished in the struggle to gain rights and working conditions that we often take for granted.

Labor Day celebrates the many accomplishments of Americans and commemorates the struggles which were necessary to achieve them. Additionally, the day honors the memories of those who paid the ultimate price battling for rights which we now consider "basic."

I suppose I am even more appalled that little opposition has been raised to this administration's policy in Aggieland.

In my brief stay here, I have been led to believe that Aggies pride themselves on traditions and patriotism. A refusal to observe a national holiday seriously raises doubts about A&M's patriotism.

Additionally, Texas A&M has the tradition of publicly honoring those people who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and for preserving the American way of life.

We do not have to look much further than the Memorial Student Center and its exterior living memorial to find tangible examples of this philosophy.

And yet as a community, we are not willing to honor those who gave their lives so that we might live in a more humane and just nation. Shame on you Aggieland!

I do not expect people to follow my lead in boycotting classes on Labor Day. However, I would appreciate Aggies doing one thing after they complete reading this letter.

I would like people to take a minute to think and consider the true meaning of this important holiday. Thank those nameless work-

ing men, women and children who fought long and hard and lost their lives creating a better world for us. Honor their memories

Additionally, reflect on what steps we can take to make this a less barbarous and socially just planet. We Aggies owe it to our ancestors, ourselves and our children to do so.

> Bruce Kaplan Graduate Student

Regents display conflict of interest

I am most concerned about the recent actions of the Board of Regents concerning the initiative to add a student liaison to the Board.

The initiative was tabled in committee, essentially killed; therefore, there will be no student liaison.

The Regent who made the motion to table the initiative addressed students attending the Board's afternoon session

most eloquently, encouraging students not to give up on this idea, while at the same time acting to stifle student involvement. This sentiment is terribly self-contradictory

I felt insulted, like a child who had been patted on the head and told to come back when I was older.

If a business (university) was not interested in consumer (student) input, would the product (education) have the mark of quality?

As president of the Graduate Student Council, I have always been impressed with the lengths to which Texas A&M University goes for its students.

Developing strong student leaders to be leaders in a worldy society is a priority at this University. Students participate in a myriad of organizations which have a direct impact on the future of this institution.

There is such a rich history and tradition of student leadership at Texas A&M that it baffles me that the Board of Regents would not accept a student liaison. This liaison would have had no voting privileges, just verbal input.

Becky Silloway, speaker of

the Student Senate, introduced five of the eight student body presidents from the Texas A&M System to the Board's committee, including Toby Boenig, student body president at Texas A&M.

Each student body president spoke in support of a student liaison. Additionally, many Texas A&M students attended Friday's meeting to demonstrate their support.

I believe that students at Texas A&M University are fully capable of making informed and intelligent decisions and suggest tions concerning their future.

Does the Board of Regents disagree with me on this point?

If not, then I see no reason for the Regents not to allow one student to participate continuously on the Board of Regents.

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I believe that students, the University and the Board of Regents would all benefit substantially from such a cooperative arrangement.

So what do you think Ags? Do you want a voice in determining your future?

> Stepheni S. Moore President of the Graduate Student Council