

# OPINION

THURSDAY  
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## Childishness chills peace in Ireland

One of the worst feelings is to have something within reach only to watch it get snatched away right before your eyes.

After more than a thousand years of fighting, the Irish were finally making strides toward peace after the Irish Republican Army agreed to a cease-fire almost two years ago.

However, the same car bomb that destroyed a hotel in Northern Ireland also tore apart present hopes for peace.

Fortunately, the group responsible for the bomb warned the hotel, avoiding 250 needless deaths.

Although the intent to kill was absent, the bombing makes a powerful statement about the situation in Ireland, and it sure doesn't seem like an overture to peace.

The recent conflict began when members of the Orange Order, a Protestant fraternal organization, decided they just had to march straight through a predominantly Catholic area of Londonderry. They were celebrating the victory of Protestant King William III over Catholic James II more than 300 years ago, a deliberate slap in the face to their Catholic neighbors.

Although police did attempt to block the march, they gave in after Protestants responded to the blockade with four days of rioting.

By this time the Catholics were only mildly upset, so they decided to throw gasoline bombs and bricks at the police. As a result, one person died and the center of London-

derry was reduced to rubble.

Cause-and-effect relationships similar to this one have marked much of the hostilities in Northern Ireland over the years.

In an interview with the New York Times, Rev. Con McLaughlin, who has buried many people as the result of violence in Ireland, said he has "never seen people so depressed to the point of despair."

So why would people starved for peace deliberately provoke a reaction?

In an exhausted area torn apart by hatred, it seems that people would be willing to put aside the little things for the sake of peace.

One of the first things you learn in college is how to live and let live. You have to learn how to compromise or your roommate will drive you crazy. If my roommate ruins my favorite shirt, the reasonable reaction is not to set her favorite shirt on fire.

Sometimes you have to focus on what is really important. The right to walk down a street in a celebration that slaps Catholics across the face is not crucial to life when peace is at stake.

There is no easy solution to how Ireland should be governed, or an easy answer that will make everyone happy and erase the painful memories. But if the Irish want peace badly enough, they must put aside their inclinations toward retaliation and act a little more mature.

More than 3,000 lives have been lost in the last 25 years through countless bombings; there is no need for any more.

Heather Pace is a Class of '99 English major



HEATHER  
PACE  
COLUMNIST



JEREMY  
VALDEZ  
COLUMNIST

## Ignoring energy leaves U.S. running out of gas

Maybe Keanu Reeves should be the country's next energy secretary.

After all, in the upcoming film *Chain Reaction*, he plays a young researcher who finds a way to generate energy from a cold-fusion process.

Keanu would know that we may be left in the dark if we can't develop a better energy policy.

The alternative energy cause has been ignored largely because of its major proponents. Environmental activists have sought increased support for alternative energy research for more than 30 years.

Ever notice that for every tree-hugger, there are three rich guys with saws? While naturalists continue to attack the fossil-fuel industry as a danger to the planet, their foes — who usually enjoy deeper pockets and more political power — contend that the ecosystem isn't in such dire straits.

Another reason alternative fuels research has stalled is the scientific community has reached no consensus concerning the longevity of fossil-fuel reserves.

But whether or not the sky is falling (or filling with greenhouse gases), the search for new energy sources is a necessary and prudent activity.

In 1991, our nation experienced the consequences of being dependent on foreign lands for our energy sources. As our armed forces departed to fight in the Gulf War, protesters waved picket signs demanding we spend "no more blood for oil."

The protesters, although well-meaning, overlooked the fact that Americans rely upon a constant and steady supply of energy. The nation's hospitals, economic centers and methods of food distribution are useless without the juice that runs them. Now more than ever, there are few things worth fighting for more than energy resources.

And looking ahead, the incontrovertible truth is sooner or later we will need new sources of energy.

The prospect of another industrial nation developing an alternate energy source is not reassuring. The United States cannot afford to fall behind in the race for a new energy wellspring. Our current position of dependence on foreign oil shouldn't be traded for a future reliance on foreign technology.

Beyond the perils of economic dependence, the use of fossil fuels for energy generation is an inefficient consumption of a valuable resource. Oil and coal are feed stocks from which scientists and engineers man-

ufacture plastics and other important materials and specialty chemicals.

Fossil fuel derivatives are essential to agriculture, pharmaceuticals, food processing and many other industries. Simply stated, oil and coal are too valuable to burn.

Finally, a certain amount of credence must be given to the admonitions of environmentalists. By introducing an unnatural amount of combustion gases to our atmosphere on a continual basis, we are conducting a dangerous environmental experiment where we ourselves are the guinea pigs.

The pursuit of new energy sources is a scientific undertaking that should interest the government as much as the Apollo project did in the 1960s. Currently, the government conducts its own research in alternative fuels as well as funding efforts at universities across the country. But this groundbreaking project still has not received sufficient funding.

The federal government spends over \$5 billion annually on energy programs. According to Dr. Mark Holtzapfel, a professor of chemical engineering, only about \$250 million is spent each year on renewable energy research.

In terms of total per capita expenditure, the federal government spends approximately \$6,000 each year for every man, woman and child in the United States. About one dollar of that would go to alternative energy research.

There are several ways to improve our present energy situation. One of the most developed, albeit controversial, solutions is to renew interest in nuclear fission energy. Current reactor technology makes nuclear energy a viable power source in search of a good waste-disposal mechanism.

Certainly, the development of fusion power generation would be a discovery comparable to finding the Holy Grail, and recent breakthroughs suggest that fusion technology may be within reach. The promise of clean, abundant energy in concert with the current spirit of scientific optimism should encourage policy makers to loosen the research and development purse strings.

But if the need for alternative energy research is so great and prudent regardless of our assessment of our ecological health, why hasn't the nation's energy industry pursued it with greater vigor? Why should we continue to import 25 percent of our energy from foreign countries? It seems that our energy producers benefit financially from a certain amount of inertia.

Unfortunately, neither our energy needs nor global politics seem willing to oblige.

Jeremy Valdez is a Class of '96 chemical engineering major



### MAIL CALL

#### Rock climber sees no evidence of degradation

I must take offense at the letter by Norman White, which states that rock climbers regularly damage the environment. As an avid climber, I recognize that anytime a person chooses to spend time outdoors, he will have some impact on the environment. Climbers are no exception to rule, but we are certainly not the vandals White accuses us of being. He stated, "Many rock climbers now often carry electric drills so they can drill finger holds" and "marking each newly drilled hole with spray paint." Of the perhaps 40 different climbers I know well, not one owns an electric drill capable of drilling holes in rock, nor would they if they did. I have traveled to several different states to climb, and climbed at many different areas. Only once have I seen drilled holds, and that was on boulders that were surrounded by the city with concrete slabs, picnic tables and barbecue pits — hardly a "pristine spot." I have never seen climbers marking holds with spray paint. Indeed, many climbers do use chalk, but even this is restricted at certain areas, and normally washes off when it rains.

When White sees climbers with drills, they are normally placing bolts, which in certain types of rock actually help prevent future damage to the rock. They also protect the climber, as well as being small enough they cause little visual pollution. Much less than, I'm sure, the road or trail used to access this "pristine area."

White states that "If the real climbers cannot accept responsibility for the actions of less pure climbers, then all climbing should be prohibited." This statement strikes me as silly. Does White drive a car, and if so, is he

willing to give up driving if he can't prevent all drunk-driving accidents? While I will admit climbers aren't perfect, I've never met a climber who is the demon White suggests, and it is this type of lies and misinformation that tarnish the image of a healthy, fun and exciting sport.

Geoff Jennings  
Class of '98

#### Boldt nitpicks in assault on Singing Cadets' name

David Boldt has found a truly newsworthy topic. Evidently, many of the so-called Singing Cadets are not really members of the Corps of Cadets. This fraudulent misrepresentation of the choir's affiliation should be promptly rectified. In addition, it is clear that many students of Texas A&M are not students of agriculture, and therefore are not Aggies in the truest sense of the word. These people should stop referring to themselves as such. Boldt's line of reasoning could undoubtedly be applied to many other misnamed groups.

Before making a mountain out of a molehill, maybe we should reconsider the advice of Name Police Cadet Captain Boldt. Some of our traditions have changed for fairly substantial reasons. If the Singing Cadets were a disgrace, there would be just cause for a name change. Rather, they are a source of pride in Aggieland. If their audience makes the unfortunate mistake of thinking they are Corps members, so be it. Hopefully, most cadets are less irritated by such a small matter.

Rhodes Murphey  
Class of '96

#### Fame, fortune buy freedom in courts

In the wake of controversial court proceedings such as the O.J. Simpson double-murder trial and his subsequent acquittal, many have begun to question the sanctity of the U.S. criminal justice system, charging it with having an elitist slant. In such a system, it seems as fame and/or fortune has the potential to balance the scales of justice in its favor. This line of thinking was reinforced with the recent gift of a plea bargain offered and taken by Cowboy wide receiver Michael Irvin earlier this week. Somehow, the outspoken All-Pro went from facing a 20-year jail term to a plea of no-contest, which carried with it a relatively minuscule fine, some community service and in all likelihood no NFL reprimands. Staunch Cowboy fans may blindly cheer the plea and its virtual assurance that their play maker won't be forced to take an extended leave of absence from the game.

However, this myopic view fails to address the reality that such outcomes are fostering a new brand of untouchables in which culpability is directly aligned with socioeconomic status. Few will argue that such a trend in the courts left unguarded has the potential to erode the most fundamental of democratic ideals: equality. Time will only tell if Irvin was sincere when he expressed his regrets and vowed to be a better husband and father. For his sake, the next time he talks about "Coke," it better be of the carbonated variety.

Todd Friant  
Class of '99

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.

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THE BATTALION  
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**EDITORIAL**  
GHASTLY GUANO  
Physical Plant is trying its best to mitigate the matter of the monstrous mess.

In enduring the summer heat on campus, many students are worried about smelling like sweat. However, two odors put perspiration to shame: birds and their by-products.

Although deodorant can remedy sweat, there isn't much that can be done about the stench from the sky.

Like Tippi Hedren's character in the Alfred Hitchcock classic, A&M attracts birds by the thousands. The warm climate and many trees on campus draw grackles and other birds year-round.

Currently, Ross Street near the Chemistry and Halbouty Buildings is an especially dangerous war-zone. Pedestrians must avoid guano bombs from the sky, in addition to coping with a stench as potent as nerve gas.

For its part, Physical Plant is doing what it can to minimize the problem. Workers are hosing down the streets and sidewalks to keep the area reasonably clean. To reduce the on-campus bird population, Physical Plant is trimming the

trees, airing tape recordings of distress calls, and setting off bird-scare cannons. It is also placing colorful balloons in the trees to scare the birds away.

Even though it may seem like Physical Plant is not doing enough to combat the birds, it is actually doing an admirable job. The only other things Physical Plant can do are cut down the trees (an extreme measure) and kill all the birds (an increasingly appealing, albeit inhumane, option).

Furthermore, Physical Plant employees have been working tirelessly on an utterly unpleasant assignment. As passers-by scurry across Ross Street, Physical Plant employees toil in the oppressive heat and disgusting odor to improve the environment any way they can. Obviously, if there were a permanent solution, these people would have the incentive to implement it.

So those who can't bear the smell have two choices: avoid the area or hold their breath.

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