THE BATTALION

MONDAY August 5, 1996

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OPINION

Should the Christian Coalition remain tax-exempt? Organization cannot mask Group endorses candidates its Republican affiliation based on positions, not party

ho is using whom? Sue Wrenn, chairman of the Democratic Party of Virginia, said the Christian Coalition "is nothing more or less than an arm of the Republican Party, an arm that has been used to bend and break the law.'

Taking an initial glance at the recent political activities of the Christian Coalition, it is safe to say that the group leans heavily toward the Republican Party.

But is it working to promote the GOP's interests, or its own? In a lawsuit filed last Tuesday, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) accused the Christ-ian Coalition of improperly exhibiting "express advocacy" for certain candidates in the Republi-cer Derty Reserved it is closeified as a "social can Party. Because it is classified as a "social welfare" group under the tax code, the coalition currently maintains a tax-free status. However, along with the tax-free status, the group must also stay away from partisan politics. It is understandable the Democratic Party

would be upset at the Christian Coalition's overwhelming support of Republican candidates. In the 1992 Bush re-election campaign, the coali-tion published about 28 million voter guides that favored Bush over Bill Clinton. The coalition also assisted in the election campaigns of Sen. Jesse Helms (1990), Oliver North (1994), U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis (1992), and Newt Gingrich (1994). All of

these men are Republicans, but is that the real reason the Christian Coalition supports them? Although it has a solid history of supporting Republican candidates through the distribution of voter guides and the identification of possible voters for certain Republican candidates, it is questionable that the coalition is being used by the Republican Party

the Republican Party. Rather, it is probably the Republican Party that is being used by the Christian Coalition. Because the GOP tends to be conservative in

nature, many of its goals fall along the same lines as those of the Christian Coalition. If the Christian Coalition does distribute voter guides telling people to vote for a Republican over a De mocrat, it is probably because the Republican will represent the group's interests more effec-tively than the Democrat.

Some may call this partisan politics, but others may call it a right to free speech under the First Amendment.

Furthermore, the Christian Coalition has every right as a non-profit, tax-exempt organiza tion to engage in direct political activity, according to Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. Also, there are other non-profit organizations that are just as involved in voter education as the coalition, including the Chamber of Commerce, the National Education Association and the Sierra Club.

Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christ-



HOWARD COLUMNIST

ian Coalition, has called the FEC lawsuit "totally baseless," and that is exactly what it is. While accusing the coalition of coordinating its political activities with campaigns of Republican candidates, the lawsuit does not specify the type of coordination.

The Christian Coalition should be allowed to continue its participation in politics without hav-ing to report its expenditures or be subject to taxation. It does not endorse candidates based on their party affiliation, but on their stand on the issues the coalition deems important.

Jenni Howard is a Class of '96 economics and international studies major

hree things are inevitable in life: losing to the Ag-gies, dying and getting taxed. Well, not everyone gets the honor of losing to the Aggies, but all of us die and pay taxes. All of us except the Christian

Coalition Ralph Reed is the executive director of the Christian Coalition. Both he and his organization claim to be strictly educational and non-partisan. Under the guise of a religious organization, the

Christian Coalition doesn't have to report where its





MARCUS GOODYEAR COLUMNIST

money comes from or where it goes. And since the coalition is not classified as a Political Action Committee, no federal spending limits are enforced upon it.

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The FEC has brought a lawsuit against Ralph Reed's group for illegally spending thousands of dol-lars to promote certain Republican candidates. From the FEC's perspective, the issue is simple: If the Christian Coalition is not going to pay taxes, report its financial records or abide by federal spending limits, then it sure better remain non-partisan.

Mike Russell, Christian Coalition communica-tions director, claims that the lawsuit "is a complete-ly baseless and legally threadbare attempt by a reckless federal agency to silence people of faith and deny them their First Amendment rights.

Please. The lawsuit is not about the Christian Coalition's freedom of speech; it is about government control of campaign spending.

If Mike Russell and his people of faith don't want to abide by FEC regulations, then the Christian Coalition should not give money to political cam-paigns or spend its own money collaborating with these campaigns. It shouldn't rank Newt Gingrich as "a Christian Coalition 100 percenter." It shouldn't have distributed 10 million "Reclaim America" voter guides that distinguish between "Good and Misguid-ed" commersemen and it shouldn't be planning to dised" congressmen, and it shouldn't be planning to dis-tribute 60 million of them for the 1996 elections.

In 1992, it shouldn't have accepted a \$60,000 donation under the stipulation that the money will be spent on George Bush's campaign, as Coalition bookkeeper Judy Liebert claims the group did.

None of these activities is nonpartisan. The voter guides and money contributions coordinated with a campaign are illegal if the Christian Coalition wants to avoid FEC jurisdiction and paying taxes.

The group can do what many other organizations have done. The Sierra Club and the Chamber of Commerce have set up PACs that are subject to federal reporting requirements and spending limits, and they funnel all of their partisan activity through these committees

The Sierra Club doesn't have to remain nonparti-san when 74 percent of the delegates to the Republi-can National Convention oppose environmental groups. They would be stupid to remain nonpartisan.

But if they would be stupid to remain inipal usan. But if they want to endorse candidates who sup-port environmentalism, then they must do it through a regulated PAC that pays taxes. Ralph Reed claims "that people of faith have every right to be involved as citizens and as voters."

He's absolutely right.

The people of the faith of Ralph Reed and Mike Russell can vote for whoever they want. They can volunteer for the Republicans or even the Democrats, but they can't organize themselves into a political organization that aids candidates' election campaigns without paying taxes.

The lawsuit is not an attempt to crush these people of faith and their organization. The Christian Coalition will eventually die on its own, anyway. But before it dies, it is going to pay its taxes

Marcus Goodyear is a Class of '97 English major

appreciation, assimilation

Culture shock leads to

ROSIE

ARCELAY

COLUMNIST

ast week, a couple of friends and I decided to meet at one of the Northgate establishments for lunch. While I was casually flipping through one of my school books, one my friends arrived; and as if by instinct, I almost got up to greet him with

a kiss on the cheek.

But then I remembered, as I've had to many times this summer, "You just don't do that in Texas." Or for that mat ter, in the States — or in any Anglo so-ciety. But you do in a Latin one. Greeting people by kissing them on

the cheek is as common in Puerto Rico - where I'm from - and in the rest of Latin America as saying "Howdy" at A&M. Women greet their male and fe-male friends this way, and guys greet females this way too.

This is not common in the States, and I learned that the hard way. The first time I came to Texas, nobody warned me about it. Culture shock is not something they teach you during Orientation Week. Trying to stop kiss ing people when I greeted them was kind of hard for me, especially when the cute guys approached.

Things were also different in other areas: At dinner, everyone used their forks and knives exactly the way my mother had taught me not to. Fashionwise, people wore socks with their sandals (a definite no-no back home) and sweatshirts with shorts when it was cold (something that is still an oxymoron to me).

Food was another thing I had to get used to. It's a tough transition from rice and beans, beef steak and plantain-derived foods to refried beans, guacamole, brisket and chicken-fried steak (something I still haven't dared to try). A bottle of Naya is now my best friend since the water here tastes way different from the distilled water at home.

Music was an area where I did not expect much difference from back home. After all, I grew up listening to radio stations that played Top 40 hits — with a few bits and pieces of salsa and merengue — and I expected to listen to Top 40 songs here. Country was not unknown to me, but experience had taught me to hate it. Little did I know that College Station was a big branch of the country music tree. The next thing I knew, it was like in the movies: the unusual accent, the boots and the 10-gallon hat, and George Strait blaring from every other pickup truck.

Yet, slowly and steadily, I became not only an Aggie, but a hybrid Texan. Knowing nothing about football, I stood all through my first Aggie game and fell in love with the Aggie Band. My view of the Corps shifted from an idea of an obscure organization of "them" to "My Corps Boys." A GMC Sierra became my wish for a graduation present — not a Lexus like before. "Y'all" became my favorite word in the Texan vocabulary and I'm gathering enough courage to give chicken-fried steak a try.

The thought of home is something you bring with your suitcase when you arrive at college, and that stays with you the rest of your life. I still listen to my merengue; postcards and pictures of beaches and emerald mountains decorate my walls.

And I can't wait for the day when I'll get a kitchen where I can cook an hon-est-to-goodness, full-scale, Puerto Rican meal — real food, for once in three years. Nuked rice never tastes quite like homemade

Although I knew I would encounter different cultures when I came to A&M, I expected the local culture to embrace me; I did not expect to adopt it myself. Somehow I've managed to assimilate while keeping my original cultural iden-tity, although I'm still a bit disappointed that I can't greet my closest friends with a kiss on the cheek.

> Rosie Arcelay is a Class of '98 history major



Bomb calls to mind cavalry, not Calvary

This letter is in reference to Ray Her-nandez's column in the July 30 issue of The Battalion called "Bombing Causes Reflection." I am a senior in Parsons' Mounted Cavalry and am flattered he

thought the Spirit of '02 had been fired when he witnessed the explosion at Centennial Park. However, it would behoove him next time to think about the words he is using. His quote mentioned "the Parsons' Mounted Calvary cannon." One thing I can assure you is that Jesus was not in the cavalry, but he did die on Calvary. I am speaking on behalf of all other

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vary and cavalry mixed up again.

Bradley Frye Class of '97

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Fax: (409) 845-2647 E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

