

Weather presents problems

...patiently, I stalked the hallway outside The Battalion office Thursday afternoon.

For fear of messing up my uniform, I refused to step out into the rain. I needed to pick up laundry, get measured for boots and do sundry things, but still I did not want to get outside.

Considering my helplessness, it seemed to me that, despite all our technological accomplishments, we are still very much at the mercy of nature.

By eliminating the voting process, we would save time, energy and, considering how thick ballots have become, lots and lots of paper. Probably enough to spare a few trees that could be used for toilet paper.

This proposed system does sound a little like communist Russia, but, to be fair, the Politburo really did a hell of a good job. We boast about a peaceful exchange of power, but it could never compare to the communist system. All the political posturing was kept behind closed doors, sparing the public from the negative campaigning that we endure in America. When a leader was no longer considered fit to serve, his name slowly disappeared from the newspapers,

replaced by the new leader's name. The people never even had to worry about voting, giving them more time to focus on their families and possible escape to the Western world.

It would be nice to avoid the division and bitterness that comes with election years. As long as people keep voting, we're doomed. But if we stop voting, maybe we'll stop holding elections and just base decisions on the handy polls that tell us how to vote anyway.

One thing will have to change, though. Most media don't cover enough polls, giving more attention to "informative" pieces about "issues." Don't the media know that we don't want to bother with making up our minds objectively? We really just want to see how everyone else is planning to vote. So more poll coverage is necessary.

Historically, some may argue that a few elections have been too close to trust to the polls. In 1960, John F. Kennedy

Voters should say 'yes' to banning elections

This election year, we should try something new — not voting. Some Americans have been doing it for years, and good for them. They know how the system works.

This isn't just some crackpot protest idea. No, let the protest voters vote for Ross Perot. The people who don't vote actually are endorsing the system. It's a message to those in power: We know we can't effect change, so you decide who will rule.

Actually, it isn't quite that grim. We have polls that decide who will win the elections well before the first Tuesday in November. Just as we trust polls to decide the best team in Division IA college football, we should trust polls with who will be leader of the free world. The two-party system already

provides a sort of playoff, so that issue is moot. Allowing polls to decide is also another way we can privatize a governmental function, which should endear it to Republicans. And the vast numbers of people who are polled makes it highly representative of the general population, which will win Democratic support. It's hard to imagine that in a group of 1,000 or so voters, not even one will represent each individual's views.

As time goes by, we could even streamline the process. Figure in the several types of voters — conservative, liberal, Republican, Democrat — make sure to have one person from each category and level of extreme, and we could get the sample size down to 20 people — tops. That would save hundreds of dollars and probably be just as accurate as letting millions and millions of American vote.

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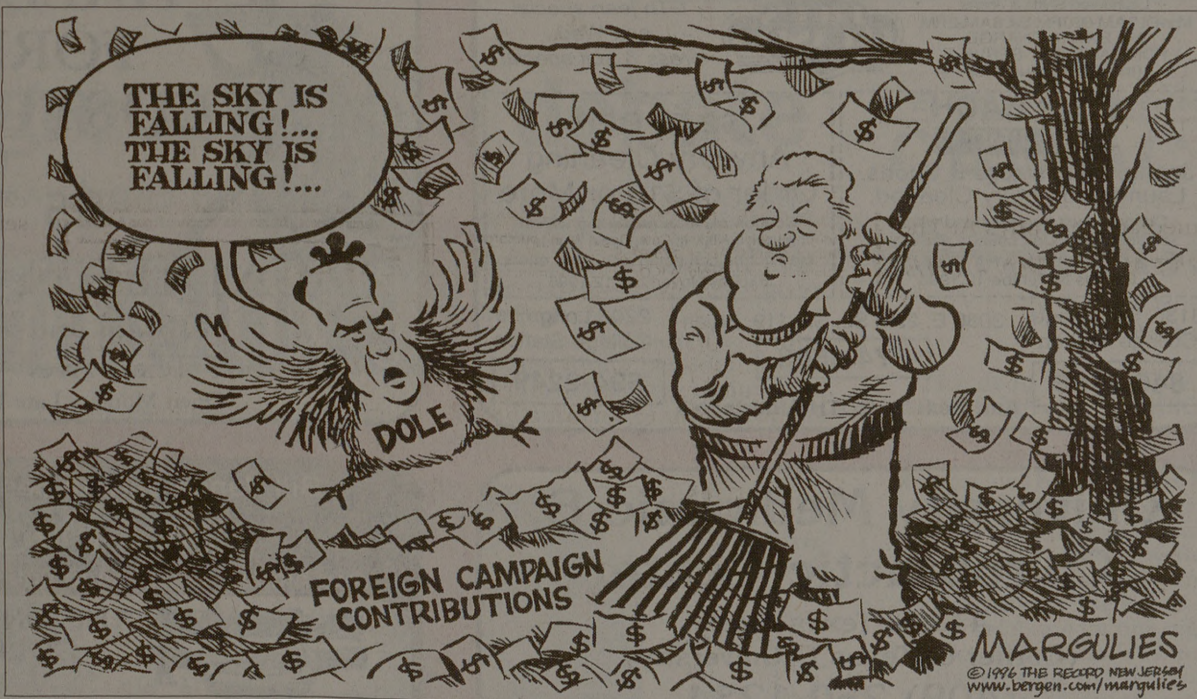
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Hollywood glamorizes heroin use

It is produced through the exploitation of cheap labor and the corruption of foreign governments. In the United States, it is pumped a milliliter at a time into blood that too often spills onto our inner-city streets. But for some reason, the entertainment industry is determined to romanticize the poison called heroin.

The latest delivery of death-in-pretty-packaging is the recently imported film *Trainspotting*, which has enjoyed commercial and critical success on both sides of the Atlantic. *Trainspotting* chronicles the misadventures of a group of young Scottish addicts who dance, drink and quote James Bond movies. They roll along from fix to fix, having witty, intelligent conversations about Scottish politics and the meaning of life.

Their addictions are little more than nuisances. When one of the characters loses a dose of heroin in the filthiest toilet in Scotland, the audience is expected to laugh as we see him literally dive into the sludge to retrieve his fix.

The film contrasts the slight rush of addiction with the orgasmic sting the drug provides. Heroin causes few problems for the characters, and whatever hardships do arise are washed away in the euphoria that one more syringe delivers.

In what is perhaps the most disturbing scene of the movie, one of the female members of the group discovers her baby dead in its crib, a victim of criminal neglect. The friends sit in horror for only a

moment, then shoot up to quell their consciences. The film has only one truly honest depiction of the pain heroin can cause. One of the characters who began the movie clean and sober is introduced to heroin by his friends. He becomes infected with HIV and dies of AIDS alone in an empty flat. However, he is a peripheral character and his death is barely a ripple in the flow of the movie's plot.

The ending has the friends becoming heroin dealers. In the final scene, the smiling narrator walks into the camera, still healthy, still addicted and a good deal richer as the Iggy Pop song "Lust for Life" plays in the background. He's moving on to bigger and better scores, and his final monologue is reminiscent of last year's Pepsi ad campaign; at any moment you expect to hear him say, "Be young, have fun, shoot heroin."

Trainspotting furthers a trend in moviemaking that shaped Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. John Travolta cruised the streets of Los Angeles in a glorious heroin-induced haze, and we laughed as Uma Thurman's cadaverous form was resurrected by frantic junkies wielding an adrenaline syringe. Travolta's Vincent Vega visited the home of the neighborhood

pusher, who reminded him (and us) that "... heroin is back in a big f---ing way." And that is so scary because the truth about heroin hangs over this country like a dark cloud, as the drug maims and kills addicts and young dealers alike. The faces of the addicts seen during a visit to a Houston methadone program hold more truth than the entire Miramax film library. Young pregnant women, prostitutes, and emaciated homeless people suffer while Hollywood personalities are paid millions to fake addiction and mold stories of characters whose lives are full of the adventure and glamour that real heroin bleeds from its victims.

While so many misguided Americans — including our former surgeon general — argue for drug legalization, we ridicule those who cry out against the popularization that drugs like heroin are enjoying. Bob Dole was right to attack an entertainment industry that exercises so little self-control and almost no fidelity to the truth about this country's drug problem.

I have sat in a theaters watching movies like *Trainspotting* and *Pulp Fiction* in the presence of other people's children. The kids sit with blank faces as they watch movies that make drug use seem cool. And I hope they grow to recognize the films for what they are: a skewed glorification of a false kind of cool — a terminal cool — that for so many ends in death.

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MAIL CALL

Cadets continue to spur hazing debate

Regarding Jason Husselman's Oct. 28 Mail Call, "Double standard applied to Corps": I would like to know how Husselman defines hazing. I fail to see how he can proclaim that wearing fish spurs causes either mental or physical anguish.

Maybe he should ask my father (Class of '66 who wore his spurs in '62) about the damage it did to him. I'm sorry to tell you that he all but helped me make mine. Not to mention all the good bull stories and memories he told me about wearing his spurs. I apologize for the fact that it angers you the way the fish in the Corps are treated, but I promise you could not find one fish on campus that will ever throw the spurs away because of the pain and suffering they caused.

Jeremy Bartlett
Class of '98

Personalizing story can change views

Regarding Heather Pace's Oct. 24 column, "Decision's ramifications go beyond right & wrong":

Pace states that because the baby was not born yet, then Cuellar could not have killed it. However, after an emergency Caesarean section, Zuniga lived for 43 hours. Even if the baby wasn't legally alive at the time of the accident, it had been born by the time of death.

Regardless of the "legal" definition of life, I would like to ask Pace to put herself in Coronado's shoes for a minute. Coronado carried a baby inside her womb for seven and a half months. She planned and cried and felt nervous because this child's life was her responsibility. Her friends gave baby showers. Coronado decided on a name... everything was going great.

Then some thug decided he could drive after he had gotten drunk. Coronado's child will never have the chance to experience everything in life that we all take for granted. This case should have nothing to do with the abortion issue. This court decision differs from the abortion dilemma because

Coronado did not make that decision — Cuellar made it for her.

This baby was robbed of life by Cuellar and he should have to pay the penalty for his actions. Drunken driving — yes. Manslaughter (or childslaughter) — yes. Our legal system seems to have forgotten the victims in too many situations. This is a prime example. I sincerely hope that this court decision does not get overturned, since there is nothing wrong with it.

Becky Morgan
Class of '98

Broad assumptions judge incorrectly

Regarding Charlie Johanson's Oct. 24 Mail Call, "Homosexuality has no place in world":

Does Johanson know the meaning of the word "secular"? He has presented his opinions as fact. If homosexuality is the result of insecurity or a broken home, Johanson must know. He must have done years of field work. Although Johanson is a person, I think we shouldn't grant equal rights to anyone who has the capacity to make such broad assumptions.

Johanson's solution of not granting universal civil rights does not go far enough. In Johanson's world, people who are sterile are equally useless to man's "secular" purpose. People who choose a career over family are also guilty of perverting man's "secular" mission. Maybe all these people should just move to France. No, France is not far enough. Perhaps Johanson would like to consider a "final solution"? I hear these can be very effective.

Anne-Elizabeth Thorne
Class of '97

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer and include the author's name, class, and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald Texas A&M University College Station, TX 77843-1111. Campus Mail: 1111. Fax: (409) 845-2647. Email: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu. For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.