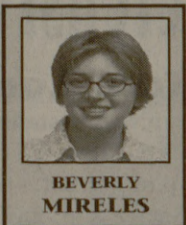


How much is that rifle in the window?

Clinton's gun buy-back program provides superficial solution to serious gun control problems

President Clinton seems determined to get an "A" in the history books no matter the cost. And the way good approval ratings is handing out money.



BEVERLY MIRELES

His newest approval-getting plan is a gun buy-back program. The program is slated to distribute a lump sum of \$15 million to individual police departments in \$500,000 allotments. The suggestion to the local police departments is to buy guns back from inner-city areas at a price of \$50 per gun.

One can hardly decide which is more offensive about this plan, its naivete or that it is such a half-hearted attempt to reduce the nation's guns supply.

While many groups are hailing his new plan and America of its guns, they should stop wasting their support on a plan that will not even make a dent in total gun possessions, much less legally-obtained guns.

This program is the equivalent of sending a shipment of food to starving people in a foreign land — it makes a big show of decency and honor, but when the food runs out, the same people are still starving. And just as starving off hunger indefinitely without offering a solution to the problem is cruel, so is teasing the American public with a program that cannot possibly affect anything further than the present.

This is not the first empty idea to come out of the Clinton presidency, but it is one of the most irritating, especially considering the recent shootings in Fort Worth and Columbine. Those tragedies signal a real, painful problem, while Clinton and Congress go around patting each other on the back for a plan that has no meaning. The \$50 for each gun, suggested by the program, is a decent amount, as far as gun buy-back programs go. But more money does not mean the plan will be effective.

However, the fact that the program is basically useless has not stopped people from lining up to support the initiative. Andrew Cuomo, secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is a major supporter of the plan.

"We have 200 million guns in this country. We have to reduce that number," Cuomo said in an Associated Press article. "Buying back the guns [from] people who have guns in the home who don't want them is one way to do it."

Yes, it is one way to do it, but not a very effective one. What Cuomo does not mention is the unfortunate reality that the program will probably not collect anything more than a trifling amount of guns.

Clinton is only bothering with the buy-back program because it is much easier than dealing with a Congress that has an aversion to gun legislation.

Clinton and Congress, seem determined to avoid real answers to questions about the place of guns in America, and it is at the expense of the public. Apparently it will take more than the deaths of innocent citizens for them to realize the uselessness of any program that presumes to reduce the number of guns in the country without even alluding to gun legislation.

It is a crime that even the well-intentioned advocates of gun control have to bend over backwards to spark initiatives through weak buy-back programs. Democracy is all about choice, but people and politicians seem to have no free will when it comes to gun legislation. Are lobbyists that powerful, or are people are so committed to guns that they would lash out at anyone opposed to unlegislated gun ownership?

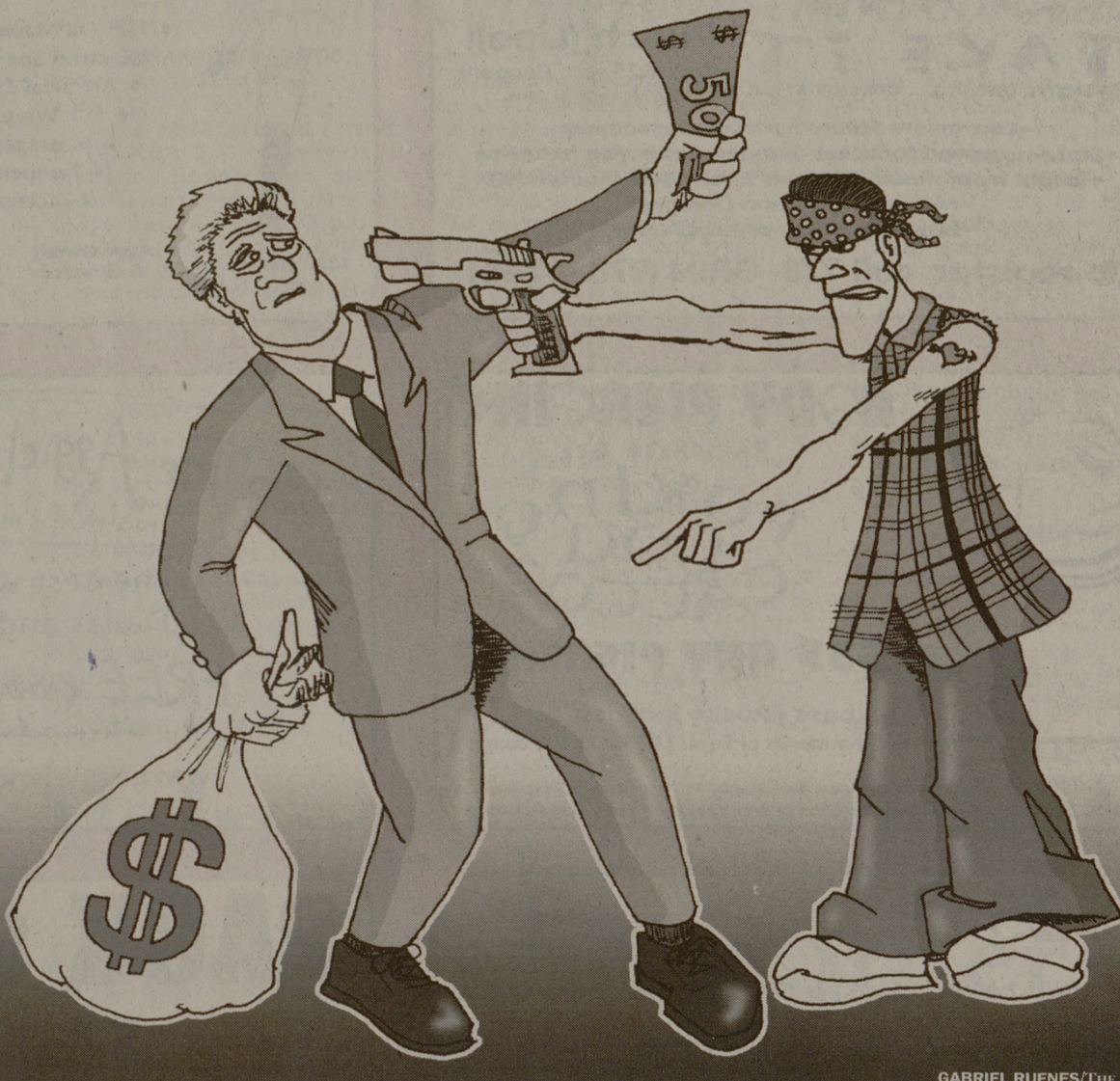
Everyone would like to hope that the gun buy-back program will be wildly effective, and that people will be willing to hand over their guns for \$50 dollars. But everyone has to face the cold, hard truth that it is not going to happen. If people did not want their guns for some reason, they would not have bought them in the beginning.

Buy-back programs mean well, and Clinton no doubt means well, too.

But his job, and his duty, is to the interests of the public.

The interest of the public, in this case, is for a meaningful source of gun legislation. Anything less, as earnest as it might be, is offensive.

Beverly Mireles is a junior microbiology major.



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Readers debate Christianity, guns

Response to Caleb McDaniel's Sept. 17 column.

I was very disturbed after reading McDaniel's column concerning Christianity and firearms. The picture that he paints of the "bloody church pews" and his insensitive tone towards the shootings made me very angry.

I am a member at Wedgwood Baptist Church and a friend to many of the people who were killed and wounded. The way he talked made me wonder if he wrote the article because he cared about the victims or if he was looking for an excuse to jump on the bandwagon of changing firearm regulation.

Many of Jesus' disciples carried swords, which were the weapons of choice at that time. In fact, in Luke 22:36-38 Jesus specifically tells his disciples, "And if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one."

Just because they had swords did not mean that they were going to go hack people to death. The same is true about guns. It is not the guns that kill people, it is the people that aim the guns. Guns, just as swords, can be used as defensive weapons as well as offensive weapons.

Robert Bollinger
Class of '02

This piece is the best article I have read in the Battalion since I first discovered it online.

McDaniel makes the point I wish everyone who claims to be a Christian should know and advocate. Jesus taught that love of God and one's fellow man is the essence of the word of the Father. Advocating the use of guns is in direct contradiction to that premise. It makes me feel good to know there is someone still left at A&M who has not sold out to the right-wing conservative Christians.

Frank Lovato
Class of '62

Those of us who believe in the Constitution and the Second Amendment should have foreseen an assault on us by *The Battalion*. Not content with characterizing us as mere hypocritical child-haters (Sept. 15 editorial), on September 17, McDaniel continued the attack by blatantly exploit-

ing the Fort Worth tragedy to also declare us anti-Christian.

It is not surprising that McDaniel and the editorial board have resorted to emotionalism and name-calling, since it is unlikely that either could have formulated a strong Constitutional argument to support their views.

The editorial board and McDaniel are quick to advocate the abdication of basic Constitutional freedoms and rights so long as it is done by someone else.

One wonders how this sort of logic would apply to all the stories that we hear about journalists who make up news stories or slant news coverage to favor one position or another. One would hardly expect McDaniel and the board to then advocate "reasonable" limitations to freedom of the press. I think not.

The fact of the matter is that gun control laws only affect those who obey the laws in the first place. Such measures would do little to curb acts of violence like the ones we have recently seen in Fort Worth or at Columbine High School.

Mike Eaton
Class of '02

Yes, I am a Christian who believes in the right to keep and bear arms.

No, I will not be rethinking my position because of bloody church pews. We have experienced a lot more bloody beaches to ensure this freedom.

Kenneth M. Kimball
Staff Member

Nasty situations in Kyle Field lines

That Kyle Field will soon be larger than the Longhorns' stadium will be little comfort to Aggie fans unable to get safely and expeditiously to their seats.

The lack of foresight of those who designed the expansion and/or the gross incompetence of those responsible for crowd control resulted in 45-60 minute waits to enter the gates for Saturday's game.

Anyone arriving at the entryway for Ramp 4 after 6 p.m. encountered a deep semicircle of fans attempting to converge on an utterly inadequate number of turnstiles.

This inexcusable situation was not merely an inconvenience — it

was downright dangerous. Had this occurred anywhere other than College Station, there would have been pushing and shoving, fisticuffs and pandemonium.

Before next Saturday's game, the Athletic Department must remedy this inexcusably dangerous situation; otherwise, the expanded Kyle Field will simply become an expensive Aggie joke.

James L. Harner
Professor of English

I was again proud to say I am an Aggie when I saw the attendance and participation at the Tulsa game this past Saturday. I was, however, disappointed at what I experienced outside the East gate while waiting in ridiculously long lines to get in to see my favorite team play.

The lines were hot, cramped and not moving; we were all, understandably, a little cranky.

However, it was very sad for me to witness the conduct of some of the crowd when paramedics and game staff began to move the crowd to make way for an ambulance and a heart attack victim.

Not only were students calling out rude and offensive things to the paramedics and game staff, but many simply refused to move and some even tried to rush the entrance in order to reach their seats before kick-off.

Everywhere around me, people were pushing to get past ticket attendants, muttering under their breath or cursing the game staff who for some "diabolical reason" wanted to keep us all from seeing the game.

The tradition of high attendance and participation at Aggie football games is something to be very proud of, but please do not let eagerness to take part in an Aggie tradition overrule other Aggie ideals like compassion for a fellow Aggie.

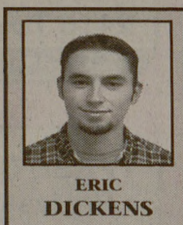
Jeni Caldronia
Class of '00

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less 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
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com

Tenure denial harms University

The details surrounding Professor John Boies' denial of tenure are about as suspect as donating blood in a dirty, run-down school bus. The facts about the case may have ended with Boies' release from the University, but the allegations, opinions and consequences of the matter have raised some serious questions about academic ethics and the future freedom of Texas A&M professors to speak freely and honestly.



ERIC DICKENS

After Boies, an untenured assistant professor in the sociology department, filed charges of plagiarism against a fully tenured sociology professor, Dr. Mary Zey, Boies said he believed he became the target of personal and professional slander by some individuals in the department.

When Boies came up for tenure review, his department gave him a positive vote to receive tenure, citing that, among other things, he had been published in one of the most respected journals of sociology. Zey's husband and tenured sociology professor, Dr. Steven Murdock, disagreed. Fellow sociology professor Dr. Dudley Poston said Murdock openly pledged he would do everything in his power to keep John Boies from getting tenured.

Texas A&M executive vice president and provost Ronald Douglas then received a "minority report" authored by Zey, Murdock and others which bypassed standard procedure and was sent directly to Douglas.

When Boies' tenure case was in his hands, Douglas stopped Boies' ascent and denied him tenure.

Boies successfully appealed Douglas' decision to the Committee on Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure (CAFRT) and a recommendation by CAFRT to re-evaluate Boies' tenure was sent to A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen. But Bowen did not agree with the recommendation and denied Boies' tenure application,

effectively firing him from his position.

The message of all this mess can easily be lost in the details, but to many A&M professors, it is quite clear.

The lesson taught to these educators is: if you call out a tenured professor for academic dishonesty, you will pay.

Poston's revelation of Murdock's intentions further strengthens Boies' stated belief that he and Zey desired retaliation against him.

The co-authors of the "minority report" knew exactly what they were doing when they stepped out of standard procedure and sent their opinion directly to Douglas.

Universities must be safe havens for dissenting opinions and open, honest debate.

In an article in *The Touchstone*, Dr. Colin Allen, professor of philosophy, said the report "falsely accused Boies of misrepresenting items on his curriculum vitae and attacked Boies' research record."

Allen said it was nothing more than a blatant attempt at destroying Boies' reputation, credibility and chance for promotion.

The possibility that Murdock and Zey were involved in Dr. Boies' denial of tenure has put the University faculty in a very uncomfortable and altogether dangerous position.

Zey's plagiarism charges were dismissed. However, with Dr. Murdock's stated intentions realized, A&M professors are encouraged to watch their backs and think twice before accusing another faculty member of plagiarism or any other forms of academic dishonesty.

As Poston said, any belief in Zey and Murdock's involvement

could create a sense among the faculty that "if you blow the whistle on a tenured professor or someone who has power, you run the risk of endangering your job at the University."

This simply cannot be allowed. Any sense of fear of retaliation for speaking up among a university's faculty is extremely dangerous. A university is nothing if it is not a safe haven for dissenting opinions and open, honest debate.

But in the minds of many A&M faculty members, the opposite has been proven true.

A&M simply cannot have the truth about such major problems as a professor's unethical practices going unmentioned for fear of being "blacklisted" by other, more powerful associates.

The dangers of unchecked authority do not need to be explained to anyone who has ever taken a history class or watched the news of late.

Unfortunately, somewhere between Murdock's statement of intent and John Boies' cleaning out his office, there is a suspicious blank that can be filled in with an abuse of power.

If Boies was kept from promotion because of a fair, unbiased review of his record, then no one would argue.

But Boies, Poston and the hundreds of other A&M professors who signed a letter to Bowen asking him to reconsider his denial of Boies' tenure application agree that a fair and unbiased review was not possible in the wake of Murdock and Zey's actions.

Whether or not Zey is guilty of plagiarism and if she or her husband had a direct hand in influencing Douglas' decision are both serious questions, but the most troubling outcome of this situation is the potential effects on A&M faculty members.

The message has been sent down to hundreds of professors at A&M that if they challenge the ethics of a tenured professor, they will face the consequences. That fact is a serious handicap to everyone at A&M and to the causes of academic honesty and fair representation in academic procedures.

Eric Dickens is a junior English major.