

Wednesday, June 7, 2000

## Private eyes...

The right to privacy, one of the biggest issues of the "human race" is currently being tested by officials in Denver, Colo., where city officials plan to use a satellite tracking system to monitor city employees. This is a clear violation of employees' rights.



SUNNYE OWENS

**Denver company violates citizens' rights by installing satellite tracking system**

Employers will be able to monitor their workers with a system referred to as the Global Positioning System (GPS). This system, with the use of satellites, can monitor employees everywhere, from their cars to employee bathrooms. Currently, the GPS trend is catching on with car manufacturers and now other types of companies are implementing the GPS system to monitor their employees. You might not know it, but your employer could be watching you do.

Many companies are installing the GPS system for many reasons, including its low cost. Though the GPS system costs the government \$12 billion to develop, GPS does not charge companies for access to the data. One has to wonder where the money to develop this system came from. It may very well have

come from taxpayers, and if the money does come out of their pockets, then is it not ironic that Americans are paying for what many consider a violation of constitutional rights?

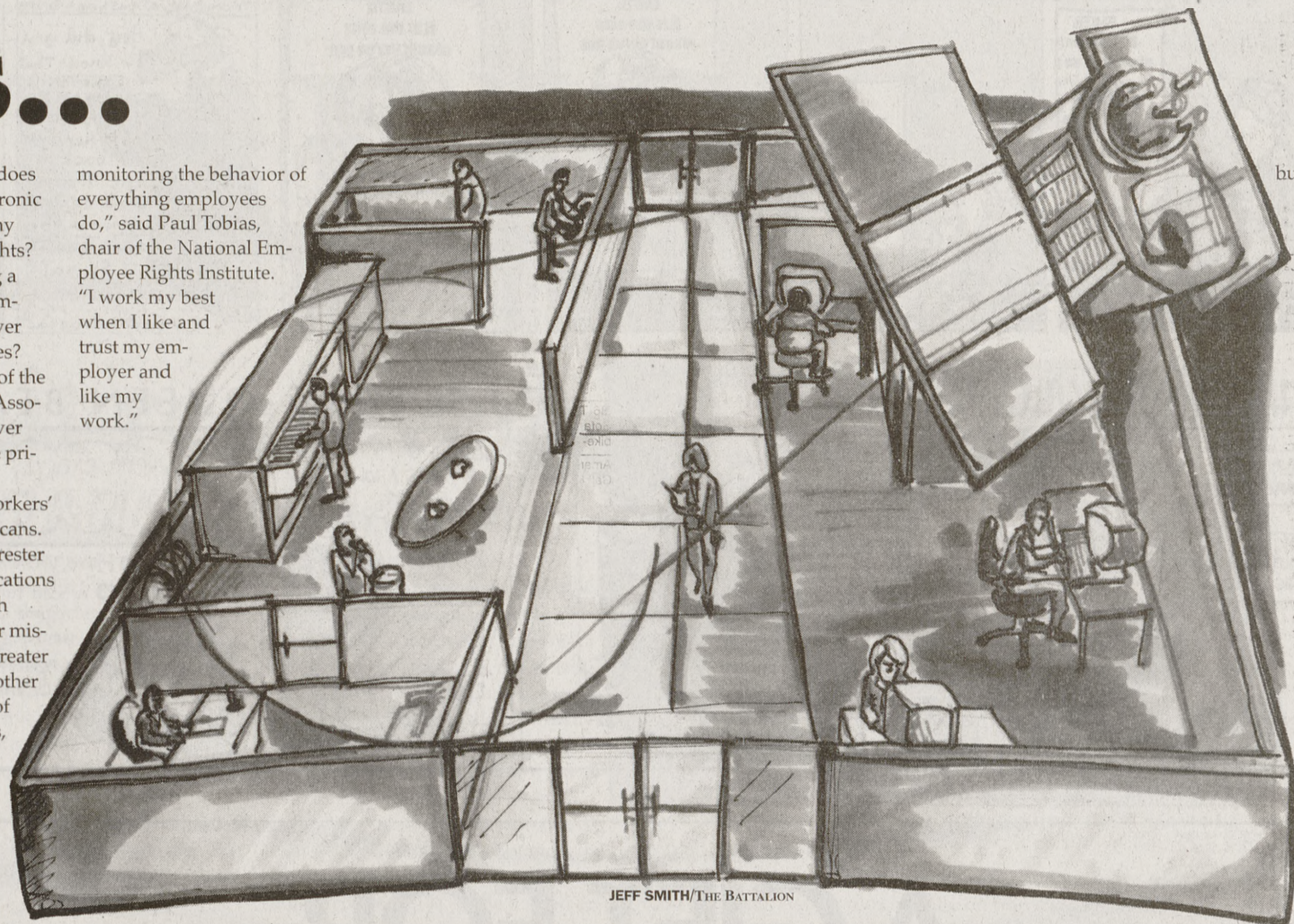
Currently, there is no law prohibiting a private employer from monitoring an employee. But what happens when employer rights infringe on the rights of employees? Todd Spencer, executive Vice President of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, said his group believes the Denver plan "tramples, smashes, obliterates the privacy rights of individuals involved."

The GPS is not only a violation of workers' rights, it is a potential danger for Americans. Amanda McCarthy, an analyst with Forrester Research Inc., said, "A lot of these applications have the potential for misuse." Although many applications have the potential for misuse, this particular system has a much greater chance for misuse. Many employers in other cities have been caught using this type of system to monitor employee bathrooms, locker rooms, lounge areas and in some cases, employee living areas.

Trust is a major issue that has come up with monitoring systems like this. How can employees trust their bosses not to misuse the GPS? The GPS monitoring system should be illegal when it is used in an improper way such as monitoring employee bathrooms. There are many other ways that employers can monitor their workers without violating any rights. If problems keep occurring with workers and employers cannot trust their employees, then they should tire of them.

"I don't like this whole trend of employers

monitoring the behavior of everything employees do," said Paul Tobias, chair of the National Employee Rights Institute. "I work my best when I like and trust my employer and like my work."



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

Statistics have proven that employees work better when they have a sense of freedom with their job. The GPS severely limits that freedom. If employers are constantly monitoring their employees, then the whole freedom aspect of the job disappears. Americans should not spend more than half their life

working under pressure. If systems like this are implemented, then the work environment will be more like a prison than an occupation.

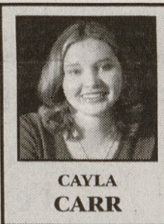
It is almost certain that Denver will install the GPS system. This puts pressure on the rest of the country to implement systems like the GPS. This cannot happen. Tracking systems are not only a threat to American rights,

also pose a frightening potential for misuse by employers. Employees should not stand for outrageous privacy violations like this. The city of Denver should put a stop to the GPS and systems like it before it is too late.

Sunnye Owens is a junior journalism major.

## Texas top 10 disregards preset collegiate standards

The University of Texas-Austin (UT) is flooded with students and, as a result, has frozen admissions for Spring 2001. Enrollment options will not resume until the summer and fall of 2001. This event raises the question: Could Texas A&M be next?



CAYLA CARR

In an admirable attempt to eliminate discrimination in public schools, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in the *Hopwood vs. Texas* 1996 case, "... race and ethnicity will no longer be considered in admission decisions at Texas public higher education institutions." This ruling influenced the 75th Texas Legislature to counter with House Bill 588 which became law in 1997. The law states that high school students will be automatically admitted into a public university in Texas if they are ranked in the top 10 percent of their graduating class. In an effort to prevent minorities from losing the chance to enter college, the state took a step backwards by creating another frivolous law.

UT is now a victim of this reactionary legislation. For Fall 2000 enrollment, there was a 15-percent increase in admissions — the University of Texas' numbers have moved from adequate to overcrowded.

For two years, the effects of this law had little impact, but now, as the high school class of 2000 crosses the stage, the college admission floodgates have opened. UT has taken a

cowardly approach and followed in the typical "quick-fix" pattern. Other public universities have had the same admission problems, and eventually all public universities in Texas will feel the effects of this drastic enrollment increase.

The number "10" holds true relevance in public education. Although there is a standard curriculum across the state, the interpretation is as varied as the landscape of Texas. There is no way to control the level of learning that takes place in each school district, yet this varied academic competency becomes the standard measurement for the top 10 percent. This 10-percent law stands regardless of size or emphasis within the local curriculum. It is like comparing

**"Ranking in the top 10 percent of a high school class does not totally reveal a student's potential."**

apples to oranges, Advanced Placement to honors and the SAT to TAAS.

Obviously, the Texas Legislature did not expect this bill to backfire. As laws are passed, they never fall short of affecting entire systems. The 10-percent admissions law was passed in an attempt to give all Texans a chance, but its potential backfire was not realized until UT closed its doors and, once

again, options for Texans are limited.

Universities had set certain standards using nationally accepted entrance exams. Lawmakers overlooked the fact that these entrance tests were designed to measure college potential. Everyone takes the same test, and the scores reflect college potential and are used for admission. With the 10-percent rule, lawmakers completely disregarded equality and enforced a law that had little bearing on college potential.

Surviving in college is not something that can be measured by any one factor.

Ranking in the top 10 percent of a high school class does not totally reveal a student's potential. It simply states that they worked hard in high school and rose to a satisfactory level, but satisfactory only to what may have been unsatisfactory competition. Competition is not standard over the entire state of Texas, therefore some students will survive, others will lag behind and many will never get the opportunity to try.

Public university admission should not limit opportunity, but instead expand it based on a variety of factors.

Admissions should examine the entire water supply of incoming students and alleviate the admissions dam using a more natural filter as a means of selection. Focus should be less on rank and more on the overall person. Entrance scores, extracurricular activities and character will, in the long run, show the true potential of college success.

Cayla Carr is a junior speech communication major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Readers sound off on Adan Carranza

In reference to Amber Rasco's June 6 column.

Rasco's argument that Carranza's gifts would be better used in Mexico is fallacious to the point of disturbance. Rasco seems pleased to ship Carranza back across the border on her hyperbolic slippery slope as if he were the second coming of Emiliano Zapata. For Carranza to bring about the changes Rasco suggests, an atmosphere receptive to change would be required.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party has ruled Mexico for five decades, control passing from the leader to his chosen heir with but only the slightest pretense of democracy. This thinly veiled totalitarianism rejects reform as a general rule. If one wished to become enlightened about the existing situation in Mexico, one should seek out the nearest Zapatistas. I am sure they would take great pleasure in expressing their satisfaction with the opportunities for advancement they have been presented with.

We have a system in place in this country for those who wish to pursue their dreams. I know because I am benefiting from the current system. The vast majority of students at American universities are American citizens. We do our best to take care of our own, but we also extend aid to those less fortunate than ourselves. This is the only morally correct path.

James Bates  
Class of '01

Did I read correctly that A&M is making an extra effort to award a scholarship to an illegal alien? Illegal aliens should be removed by the INS, not rewarded by state run institutions.

Steve Kutz  
Class of '93

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  
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### News in Brief

#### Parolee fire

Investigators are trying to find out who started a fire early in the morning at a Texas Department of Criminal Justice office that destroyed files of parolees scrambling to get their files to authorities. A fire, which started at 1:20 a.m. and was out an hour later, caused \$100,000 in damage at the west Houston office. Investigators with the Houston Fire Department said the blaze was intentional. No suspects have been named. Parolees' files were destroyed, said Linda Bosby, spokeswoman for the Parole Commission of TDCJ. She did not immediately know how many parolees who had their files destroyed. Parolees who have their files destroyed are redirected to other offices. The office is in charge of 3,700 offenders and a hundred of them visited by Bosby said. "It's too early to speculate on the fire was started by the files," she said. At the end of week we will have everyone rerouted to other offices. This does not affect their reporting to the office. In no way is public safety compromised.

### View Point

Do drivers in College Station not understand the concept of a four-way stop? Everyone who lives in College Station has dealt with the strange, incompatible mix of metropolitan and redneckville drivers that come together in the not-very-well-engineered town of College Station.

And the longer people live here, the easier it is to spot those who might slow down traffic — the out-of-towners that are clueless as to the lane changes on Texas Ave. or the truck in front of you that will soon slam on the brakes to turn into Sonic.

There are many who just do not understand the rules of College Station driving. It would probably surprise them that what they are missing are mostly rules learned in driver's ed:

- Turn your blinker on before turning.
- When the light turns green, GO.
- Watch others at four way stops. Whoever stops first, goes first.
- Do not speed around someone only to cut them off five seconds later.
- Yellow and green lights are the same.
- A cop standing on the side of the road giving someone else a ticket cannot simultaneously pull you over, too. Do not slow down, especially to a speed under the limit.
- If you need to change lanes but cannot, turn your blinker on. People are much more likely to let you in if you are courteous enough to let them know you are doing.
- College Station would be a much more pleasing place to drive if everyone would just take a few steps toward being more courteous on the road. This driver, for one, would be much less likely to use her horn — or her middle finger.

## Court case solved by common sense

Yet again, Americans can sneer at their court system, roll their eyes and think, "Not again."

Alexis Greier sued American Honda Motor Co. for the damages she received in her 1987 Honda Accord because the car was not equipped with an air bag. The case, which began in 1992, went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1987, when Greier's car was manufactured, air bags were a very new technology, and only expensive luxury cars, like BMWs, had them. Car makers were given a choice between installing air bags or automatic seat belts during this period. The seat belts were less expensive to produce, so most vehicles were equipped with the belts instead of air bags.

This is an understandable choice for car makers, since adding expensive new technology hikes up sticker prices, causing sales to plummet. In a car marketed to be less expensive, like Greier's Accord, it seems obvious the car makers would have made that choice.

After years of litigation in lower courts, the Supreme Court agreed to make the final judgement call on Greier's case last September.

Last week, the court decided car makers are not responsible for injuries that could have been avoided with an air bag if the car was manufactured before air bags were required in new cars — 1997.

A 5-year-old could have reached that conclusion. New technology is, well, new. And new usually means extremely expensive, as anyone who bought a high-definition television set in the last year will attest to.



JILL RILEY

For the court to decide otherwise would be saying that car manufacturers that do not install new technology the moment it becomes physically possible are guilty of negligence.

There would be no such thing as a lower-priced car if auto makers were required to adopt all the newest safety inventions each year. Cars would be much more expensive and fewer people could purchase new ones.

Besides economic costs, another reason to delay installing new features is that new technology needs a period of testing and adaptation before it is ready for mass production.

Even air bags needed improvements before they were safe — even now they can still harm children.

The Supreme Court is only able to hear a certain number of cases in their limited schedule, and the Greier case was a complete waste of time.

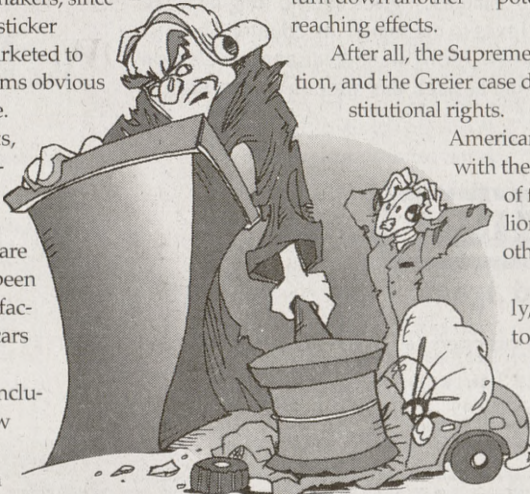
For the high court to suffer through such an elementary case, it had to turn down another — potentially one of more importance with more far-reaching effects.

After all, the Supreme Court has the power to interpret the Constitution, and the Greier case does not seem to affect Americans' basic Constitutional rights.

Americans (especially car makers) should be pleased with the verdict, since it will send a message to the rash of folks clogging the courts, trying to score millions off big business. As it is, this case is just another example of citizens misusing the system.

If Greier really wanted an air bag so badly, she should have shelled out the extra cash to get one.

Her problem does not stem from Honda's "negligent" actions, but rather in misusing the court system to score cash from someone who is not to blame.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Jill Riley is a senior journalism major.