

Sunday

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— Brad Johnson ton Redskins quarterback

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You bet, but not too proud my eyes filled with tear

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the Aggie Network.

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Aggie Network

our Aggie Network story@afs.tamu.edu

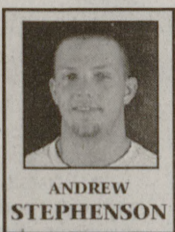
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A call to arms

Failure of gun control abroad should discourage similar domestic legislation

To better understand the effects of gun legislation, a person can look at other countries with strict gun laws similar to those being proposed in the United States. Unfortunately, the crime statistics after the laws' enforcement are atrocious. The American public should realize this and not support similar legislation being proposed here.



ANDREW STEPHENSON

cluding .22s, assault rifles, hunting rifles and shotguns.

Before these laws were enacted, crime in Australia was declining. From 1980 to 1995, the firearm-related death rate decreased 46 percent to its lowest level in the 16-year period. In addition, the firearm-related homicide dropped 63 percent.

Then — in April 1996 — a tragedy changed the face of gun legislation in Australia. A gunman killed 35 people and wounded 19 more in Port Arthur. Although this was a deranged act by a single individual, many politicians were quick to blame "loose gun laws" for causing this tragedy. These old gun laws required citizens who

wanted to own firearms — even air rifles — to pass a gun-handling course. Citizens were also required to carry a gun license with photo identification that must be presented even when buying ammunition.

The end result of these old laws was a gun turn-in scheme that resulted in the destruction of more than 640,000 shotguns and hunting rifles when new legislation was enacted. All gun owners were first required to register all firearms with the government. Then, a taxpayer-funded buyback was instituted in which all automatic and semi-automatic rifles and shotguns were collected and destroyed.

This buyback extended to all semi-auto-

matic weapons and .22 caliber plinking guns.

The supporters of this ban, including those here in the United States, actively promote this legislation's crime-fighting benefits. However, the crime statistics do not back up these alleged benefits.

Violent crime in every category except murder went up from 1997 to 1998 in all Australian states. Some of the highlights from the Australia Bureau of Statistics Website show that attempted murder went up 20 percent, manslaughter went up 26 percent, and armed robbery went up 20 percent. Essentially, crime is going up across the board in response to the new legislation.

By comparison, English crime rates as measured in both victim surveys and police statistics have all risen since 1981."

Also, the U.S. murder rate, while higher than England's, has been declining, while the rate in England has remained the same.

The belief that foreign countries such as England, Japan and Italy have much less crime than other, less-strict countries is a common gun-control myth. Crime rates are actually the same in Switzerland, Israel and Norway, which all have relatively mild gun control, as in the three previously named countries.

"Italy's gun law, 'the most restrictive in Europe,' had left her southern provinces alone with a thousand firearm murders a year, 30 times Switzerland's total," said author Richard A.I. Munday.

In Switzerland, most citizens are members of a national defense force and are issued fully automatic rifles and ammunition that they keep at home for national emergencies. Crimes with these guns are almost unheard of. Japan also has a crime rate that is continuing to rise, despite severe gun laws.

From this, the citizens of America should learn that gun control simply takes personal protection — a freedom guaranteed by the Constitution — away from law-abiding citizens.

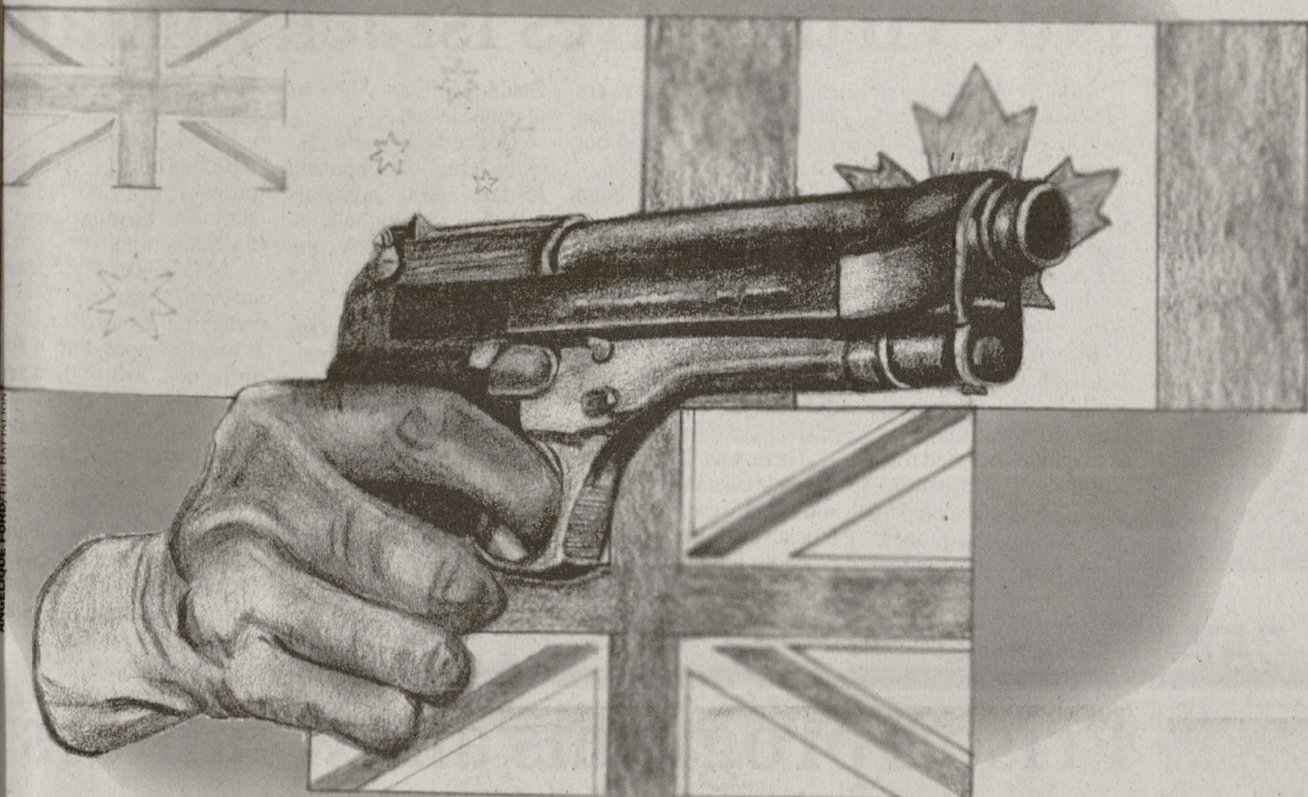
Criminals will not register their guns lawfully, should any type of national registration be enacted. Nor will they carry properly licensed firearms or buy their guns through legal outlets, which already require a background check.

If an individual already lives outside the law, what difference does it make to him or her if stronger gun control laws are passed?

The myth of other countries' legislation working here in America can be best dispelled by a quote from noted civil rights lawyer Don B. Kates:

"In any society, truly violent people are only a small minority. We know that law-abiding citizens do not commit violent crimes. We know that criminals will neither obey gun bans nor refrain from turning other deadly instruments to their nefarious purposes. In sum, peaceful societies do not need general gun bans and violent societies do not benefit from them."

Andrew Stephenson is a sophomore environmental design major.



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It is increasing partly because of the loss of a deterrence factor. The police commissioner for South Australia, Mal Hyde, was even quoted as saying, "the environment is more violent and dangerous than it was some time ago."

Increased gun-licensing laws, similar to those found in England, are another type of law many politicians promote in America.

On Jan. 16, The London Times published an article about the current increase in gun crime. The writer discussed that there are an estimated 3 million unregistered guns in the country — therefore, in the possession of criminals.

As well as confirming the obvious fact that no criminal will bother to register his or her weapon with the police, the article stated that fatal shootings in London more than doubled, while overall armed crime rose 10 percent between 1998 and 1999.

According to a study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, "For most U.S. crimes... the latest crime rates (1996) are the lowest recorded in the 16-year period from 1981 to 1996.

Perversion of justice

Controversial imprisonment of Wen Ho Lee casts doubt on authorities

When the public learns of a breach in national security, the hysteria coupled with the panic the average American family feels fuels a sense of shame and urgency in governing bodies that ultimately handle such situations.



LUKE MCMAHANA

On Aug. 24, U.S. District Judge James Parker ruled that Lee should be released on bail, reversing his December decision to keep Lee detained until trial.

After hearing what he deemed conflicting views over the importance of the information Lee is accused of mishandling, the judge wrote in his initial order for release that the government "no longer has the requisite clarity and persuasive character necessary" to keep Lee jailed.

Whatever Lee was involved in, the government's argument that it was espionage has taken a serious beating. Lee's release from prison two days ago verifies that.

Two days ago, Lee pled guilty to only one of the 59 charges against him and was sentenced to time served.

A key piece of testimony given by an FBI agent last December has since been proven false, influencing Parker's decision to release Lee. The lies Lee supposedly told his colleagues were apparently fabrications and misinterpretations made by an FBI agent.

That same agent, Robert Messemer, who claims his errors were "honest mistakes," now acknowledges that Lee did file reports of his meetings with Chinese scientists.

Lee was also threatened with the death penalty during one interview, and the fates of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were brought up in what can only be considered a bully tac-

tic in an effort to extort a confession. Is the public to assume this was an innocent slip of the tongue or are they to endorse the borderline criminal behavior the FBI appears to have used to nail Lee?

The fact remains that Lee did commit a crime by downloading secure information. The defense has never disputed that. Whatever Lee was involved in, the government's argument that it was espionage has taken a serious beating, however. Lee's release from prison two days ago verifies that.

Speculation about Lee's motive in downloading the material has varied. The prosecution even claimed in its court papers that Lee might have wanted to impress potential employers during a job search.

There is, however, no evidence that Lee was in contact with anyone about a job. The potential danger of the downloaded material, should it fall into the wrong hands, is now being questioned. The accusation made by the FBI that Lee intended to distribute the information is also being more closely examined.

The result of this is that the burden of proof is proving to be a tougher match for the government than initially anticipated, and the novel concept of justice has emerged as an obstacle — tripping up the organization who claims to be after it.

One can only wonder if the embarrassment felt by the federal organizations involved played a bigger part in Lee's arrest than the facts did. Words like "perjury" and "false testimony" come to mind when one wonders how the FBI managed to keep a 60-year-old man locked up for eight months in solitary confinement.

Luke McMahana is a senior industrial engineering major.

Bull Board

Good Bull — Since the Bush School opened in Fall 1997, students with political science and economics classes in the building have been struggling to get to lectures on time.

The University has tried to cope with the distance students have to travel by incorporating expanded bus services, but getting to Bush from main campus is often a 30-minute adventure.

Starting this semester, classes at Bush have been staggered so that students have more time between classes to commute to main campus.

Not only does this give students a realistic amount of time to travel between classes, it also makes it impossible for them to foolishly schedule classes back to back at Bush and main campus buildings.

No matter how fast a student rides a bicycle, few people can pedal from Bush to the Zachry Engineering Center in 20 minutes. Now, students do not have to.

Best of all, the early morning classes at Bush start at 8:35 — an extra half-hour of sleep in the morning is definitely good bull.

Bad Bull — Shame on the media for assuming the majority of Americans are anti-Semitic. When Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore selected his running mate, Sen. Joseph Lieberman, media coverage of the selection focused on Lieberman's Jewish heritage.

Within hours of the announcement, CNN conducted a poll asking viewers whether they are comfortable with the notion of a Jewish vice president. Pundits and analysts on every major network gave their opinions on how Americans would react. One even went so far as to ask, "What if a national crisis happened on Saturday?"

When is the last time a member of the press asked how a Christian candidate would react on a Sunday? Has Christianity become such a foregone conclusion in politics that the press feels comfortable setting a double standard when it comes to candidates' religions?

The media can continue to drum Lieberman's religion up as an issue, but Americans are refusing to bite.

Good Bull — Two of the major powers in Asian politics, Russia and Japan, finally seem to be ready to bury the hatchet and end their countries' formal participation in World War II.

Although the second World War ended 55 years ago, the two nations never signed a peace treaty, meaning they are technically still at war with one another. All that stands in the way now are four small Japanese islands seized by Soviet troops during the war.

Right-wing groups in Japan are adamant that the islands must be returned to Japanese control before a treaty can be signed.

Russia, still reeling from a series of incidents that gave its leadership back home a black eye, cannot afford to further anger its populace by giving the islands back now.

The important thing is that the two sides are talking. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori have agreed to meet at least once a year until the issue is resolved.

— Nicholas Roznovsky

