

Monday, November 20, 2000

## Don't call it a comeback

Rise of Netanyahu cause for U.S. concern

As the violence that consumes the Middle East moves into its third month, an interesting power struggle is forming in Israel. Unlike the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), whose leader Yasser Arafat enjoys nearly unchallenged supremacy, Israel is a functioning parliamentary democracy with the inevitable power struggles that typify the governmental process.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

It appears that now, in the midst of domestic crisis, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is positioning himself for another chance to lead the Israeli people. Netanyahu, prime minister from 1996 to 1999, won Israel's first direct election for the post and continues to be a force in Israeli politics even though he is now a private citizen.

If Netanyahu returns to power in the next few months, as many experts are predicting, the United States must re-evaluate its position on the Middle East and its role as Israel's unequivocal ally.

The re-establishment of a hard-liner such as Netanyahu will not resolve the tenuous situation in Israel; it will only make peace harder to attain.

Throughout his term, Netanyahu gained a reputation in the international community as an obstacle to the Middle East peace process. During negotiations, he steadfastly maintained that giving any amount of land to the Palestinians would undermine Israel's national security — a sacrifice he was not willing to make to satisfy his enemies.

Israeli political author Robert Rosenberg noted, "Netanyahu's aim from the start was to make the peace process so difficult, so tiresome, so frustrating for the Arabs that they eventually would breach it, thus proving to his constituency — and the world, via CNN — that the Arabs could not be trusted."

Ultimately, under immense pressure from the United States, Netanyahu advanced the peace process, signing the Hebron Accord and the Wye River Agreement with Arafat. In doing so, he lost the support of the rightist coalition that had catapulted him into power and soon began losing his grip on control.

In the months that followed, Netanyahu attempted to fight back. He escalated tensions with the Palestinians and began vigorously attacking his domestic political opponents, dividing the country and securing his own doom.

## According to The New York Times, Netanyahu has come out ahead of Barak in a number of recent national surveys.

"Israelis turned against Netanyahu for practicing the politics of division," wrote political analyst William Schneider in The National Journal. Israel needed a leader who could unite the country, not tear it apart.

Now, the man affectionately known to millions as "Bibi" has re-emerged into the political spotlight. After escaping a corruption investigation untouched, Netanyahu has made his views on the current governing coalition very public.

In July, the private businessman, who no longer holds official ties to any Israeli political party, addressed the nation in a live television speech. During the prime time telecast, Netanyahu said that the peace negotiations then taking place at Camp David left him with a "deep feeling that the future of the country is in danger."

"It's better to leave Camp David now without an agreement," Netanyahu said, "than to come back with a bad arrangement that endangers the future of the state."

Even from the sidelines, Netanyahu has managed to voice his unilateral rejection of the peace process, preaching the politics of division with Palestinians as the target.

Now, Israeli public opinion shifts further away from a peaceful settlement with each additional bomb that explodes in the West Bank, and it appears that Netanyahu's no-bargaining position is beginning to look attractive to Israeli voters once again.

In a poll conducted in October by Bar-Ilan University's Institute for Community Research in Tel Aviv, a majority of the poll's respondents favored early elections to determine the fate of current Prime Minister Ehud Barak. In a hypothetical race between Barak and Netanyahu, the poll's results were too close to predict a clear winner.

According to The New York Times, Netanyahu has come out ahead of Barak in a number of recent national surveys.

"Israel is certainly not the winner," said the institute's director, Dr. Ya'acov Katz. "People seem to long for Netanyahu's strong leadership — they want someone who is not a sucker and would stand firm. They want the reciprocity associated with Netanyahu."

The result of a second Netanyahu administration would certainly be reciprocity, in the form of escalated attacks by Israeli forces in response to Palestinian uprisings.

The situation is already bad enough, with Israeli helicopters firebombing Palestinian buildings in retaliation for Palestinian protests and mob violence. The Middle East does not need Netanyahu to throw gasoline onto the already-flaming fire.

If the United States is truly committed to peace in the Middle East, it cannot allow Netanyahu to destroy what is left of the peace process. If Netanyahu does return to power and the United States tolerates his politics of division, it will become glaringly obvious that America is only interested in blindly protecting Israel.

Since 1949, the United States has defended Israel without question. If Israelis elect a man who is so clearly committed to fostering unrest in the Middle East, America's role as Israel's unwavering ally must be reconsidered.

Netanyahu may be the strong leader Israel wants, but he is not the advocate of peace that the world needs. Peace, which the United States purports to want for the people of the Middle East, cannot be attained with Netanyahu at the bargaining table.

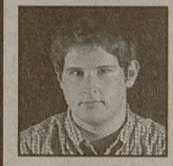
It is time for the United States to stand up for peace instead of sticking to 50 years of policy that no longer makes sense.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a senior political science major.

## Quit your whining

Smokers suing tobacco companies ludicrous; already knew health risks

On Nov. 6, Florida Circuit Judge Robert Kaye upheld a record-setting verdict that resulted in the largest punitive damages awarded in U.S. history.



MARCUS WHITE

The verdict, which awarded \$145 billion dollars to sick smokers, had been rejected by a federal court after that court ruled that it did not have jurisdiction over the case.

In July, the plaintiffs in the Florida case accused the five largest tobacco giants of knowingly making a deadly and dangerous product and, as a result, they were awarded \$12.7 million in compensatory damages.

The amount of money being given to plaintiffs in these recent court cases almost makes people wish they were addicted to cigarettes.

Although these companies knowingly make a dangerous and addictive product, smokers themselves must bear some responsibility for their health.

Some smokers told reporters that they did not know smoking was dangerous to their health and were quick to condemn the tobacco industry for their problems.

Many people would have no trouble realizing that inhaling thick, black smoke into their lungs is not a good thing to do. Smokers often put the consequences of their next cigarette out of their minds in favor of the buzz it gives them.

This passing of the buck is not new to American society. For example, in

bars across America, individuals drink more than their limit, ignoring the adverse effects alcohol has on their bodies.

The act of indulging oneself while ignoring unfavorable side effects has almost become a part of American culture.

The cigarette industry, while bearing a part

For smokers who became acquainted with cigarettes in the past, before the industry was forced to inform the

should be shown very little, if any, special consideration.

Americans must learn to take into account the repercussions of their actions. Since smoking is legal, individuals are left to decide for themselves whether they want to smoke.

This simple fact places much of the blame for smokers' problems on the smokers themselves.

The plight faced by thousands of sick smokers in the United States is a sad one. Those who want to use the majority of the \$145 billion award to fund a national public health campaign against smoking should be applauded.

This can greatly help inform the population of the risks involved in lighting up.

It is a responsibility of the tobacco industry to make the public aware of the risks involved. Tobacco giants like Phillip Morris

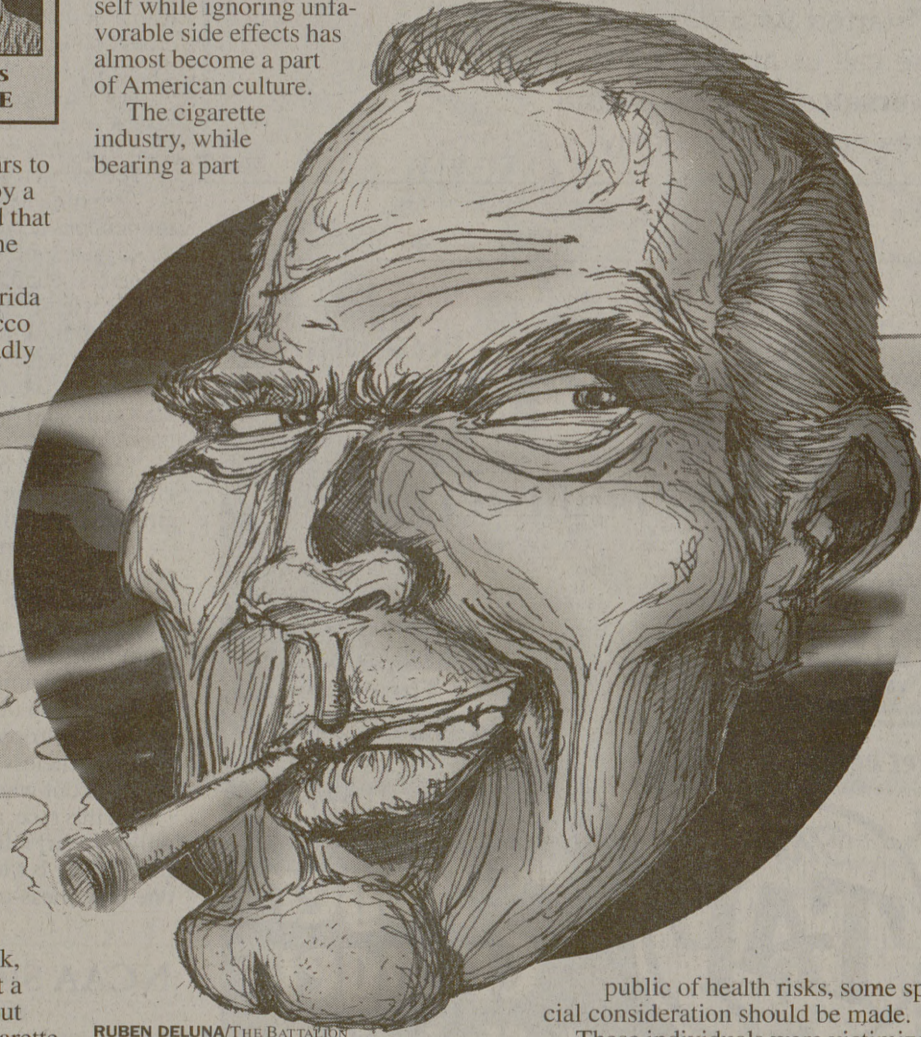
have taken steps to inform nonsmokers and smokers of the risks involved in smoking cigarettes.

While their efforts may fall short of what anti-smoking advocates deem acceptable, they are making an effort to atone for the actions of the past.

It will be a great day in America when lawsuits like this one are in the past and future Americans decide to take more responsibility for their actions.

Only then will lawsuits cease to be the method many Americans "pass the buck."

Marcus White is a sophomore general studies major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

of the responsibility, should not be held completely responsible for the actions of millions of smokers.

public health risks, some special consideration should be made.

These individuals were victimized by the tobacco industry and should be compensated. Individuals who started smoking cigarettes after information condemning the health issues involved

### Bull Board

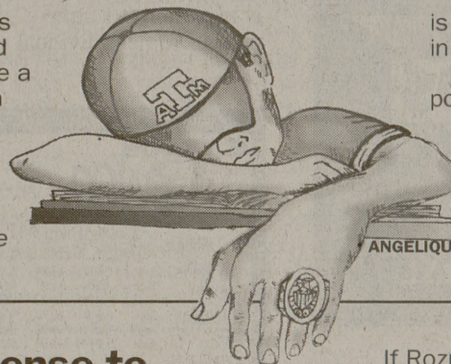
**Bad Bull** — For an Aggie, there are few things more rewarding than slipping on that hard-earned Aggie ring for the first time.

Beware, however — a serious case of "senioritis" could soon follow.

With the light of graduation visible at the end of the tunnel, it becomes easy to get careless and absent-minded about class.

If serious enough, this lapse in work ethic could spell disaster — imagine a student having to stay in school an extra semester because of a failing grade.

— David Lee



ANGELIQUE FORD/THE BATTALION

**Good Bull** — Although heated debate surrounds genetically engineered foods in the United States and Western Europe, it appears that researchers at Cornell University may have found a valuable use for them in Third-World nations.

According to a report from Reuters, Cornell scientists are close to developing an edible vaccine for Hepatitis B, a virus that can lead to liver disease, cancer and death.

It is estimated that nearly a third of the world's population is infected with the virus. The majority of the cases are found in underdeveloped nations.

By creating a vaccine that can be carried in the skin of a potato, scientists are a step closer to solving immunization problems around the world.

Researchers say that future vaccines may be carried in foods such as corn, spinach or even candy bars.

— Nicholas Roznovsky

### Mail Call

#### Comparing license to drive to gun ownership incorrect

In response to Nicholas Roznovsky's Nov. 18 column.

As I suspect a long letter would not get published, I will not take the time to refute every point Roznovsky made.

I will simply point out that, while driving is not protected by the Constitution, firearms ownership is.

"The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

In every other instance in the Constitution where the term "the people" is used, it is referring to the general citizenry.

The Second Amendment plainly states that the government is not allowed to interfere with the natural human right of self-defense.

Roznovsky seems to think that licensing would not interfere with this right.

In that case, may I suggest that we also begin forcing people to fill out an application, pay a fee and pass a test before they may speak freely in public or assemble or before they petition the government.

Any member of the press will decry the above proposals as excessively infringing on freedom of speech, freedom of press and other rights that the Constitution expressly prohibits the government from infringing.

Why then this double standard?

Jonathan Hightower  
Class of '03

If Roznovsky had bothered to look at the laws dealing with licensing car owners and gun owners, he would have discovered that they are virtually the same.

If one drives a vehicle only on private property and never on public roads, no license is needed.

Likewise, here in Texas, as in many other states, in order to carry

a handgun in public, one must obtain a license, but not so if the gun is only carried on private property.

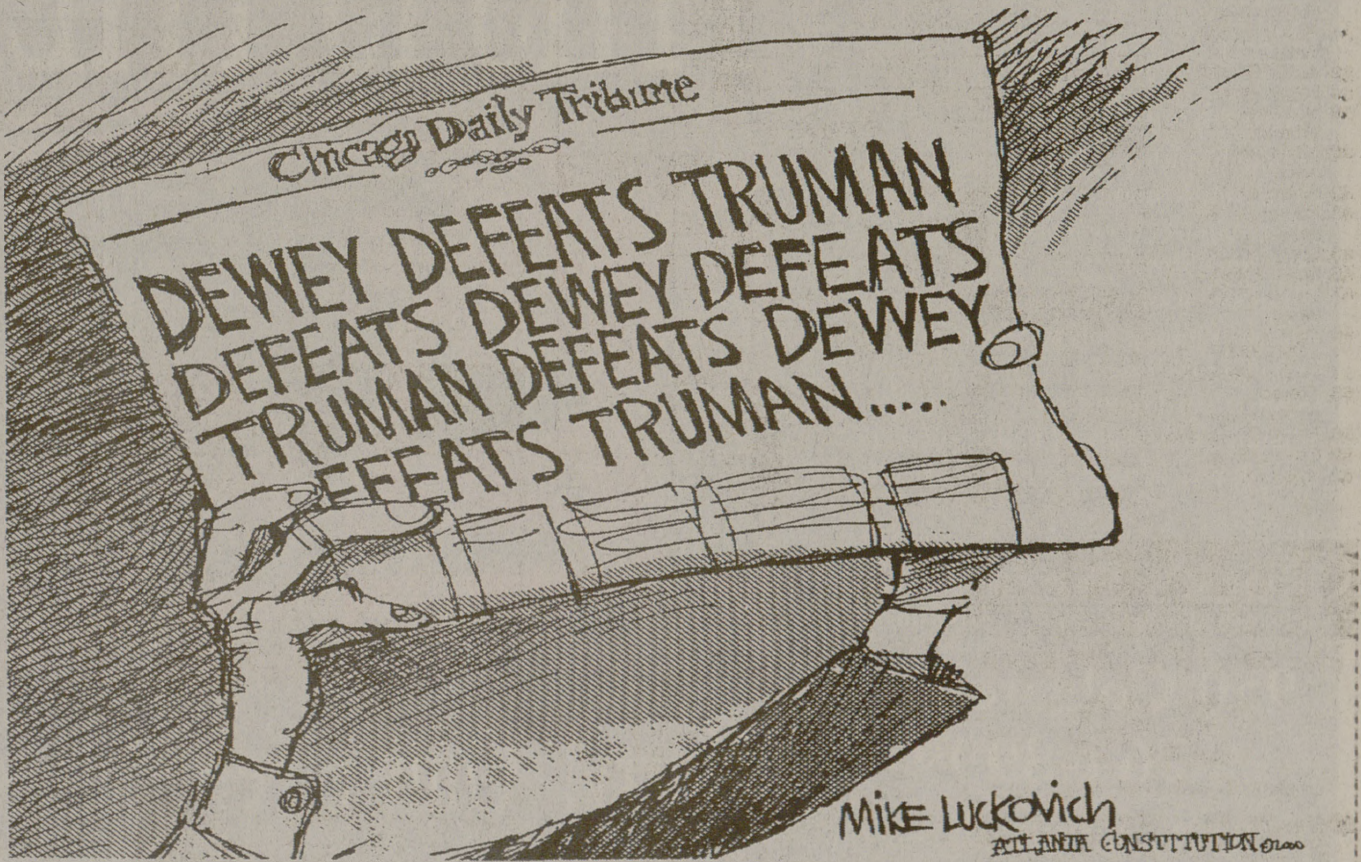
If he had looked at similar countries such as Australia and Great Britain where licensing exists, he would have found that it has only led to confiscating and a rise in crime.

Our Constitution guarantees us the right to bear arms in order to protect against government tyranny. A

freedom that is licensed and restricted is one that can be taken away.

Enforcing gun laws already on the books and teaching others to be respectful and responsible citizens of society is what will reduce crime, not the licensing of responsible law-abiding gun owners.

Mark Kelly  
Class of '01



MIKE LUCKOVICH  
ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

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