

EDITORIAL RESIDENT INJUSTICE

A new housing ordinance passed by the Bryan City Council that limits the number of unrelated people who live together is discriminatory against Texas A&M and Blinn College students, who may no longer be able to live in Bryan.

The decision came as a result of Bryan residents' complaints about college students' rowdy behavior, parking problems and unsightly front yards. This careless decision will negatively affect the students and community.

College students are a large portion of the Bryan-College Station community and have an inherent right to live in residential areas. In the past, students have opted to live in a four-bedroom residence with more than four roommates to make costs more affordable. The ordinance represents one more financial obstacle for many students to overcome.

Granted, rowdy behavior, not maintaining the property and committing parking violations are not desirable ways for students to conduct themselves. However, the City of Bryan already has the ability to issue noise violations, lawn care ordinance and parking citations. There is no need to create an ordinance that blatantly attacks college students to solve problems that already have a solution — better enforcement of existing regulations.

College students contribute an incredible amount of money to the Bryan-College Station area, therefore the community should be more accepting of students in all areas of the community. In addition, students need to take interest in topics such as local politics that affect their living standards. Policymakers generally assume that college students are not going to react harshly, if at all, to their decisions simply because they are young. In the future, Texas A&M and Blinn students should be more aware of these decisions and play an active role in a community that they have every right to take part in.

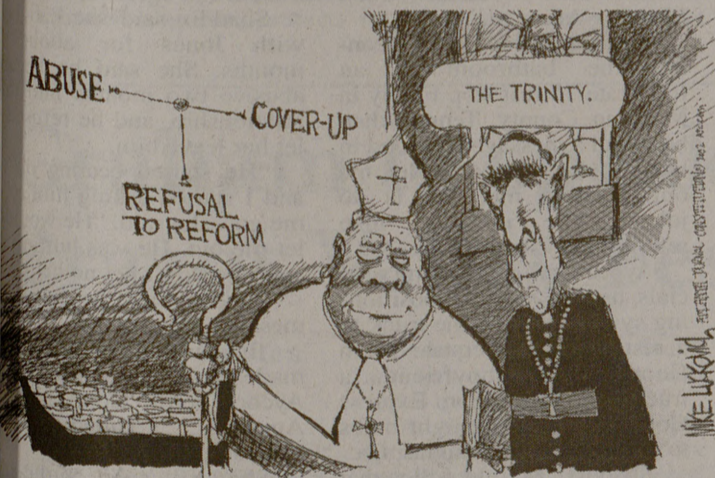
THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Rep. Brady speaks

U.S. Congressman Kevin Brady
8th District of Texas

Being frugal is not sinful, regardless

In response to George Deutsch's column April 24:

Since an opinion article is inherently biased toward one side of a story, I have no problem with Deutsch's comments criticizing televangelists. When Deutsch states at the end of his article that "These evangelists love to attack abortion, homosexuality and frugality, which can all understandably be classified as sins," he crosses way over the line.

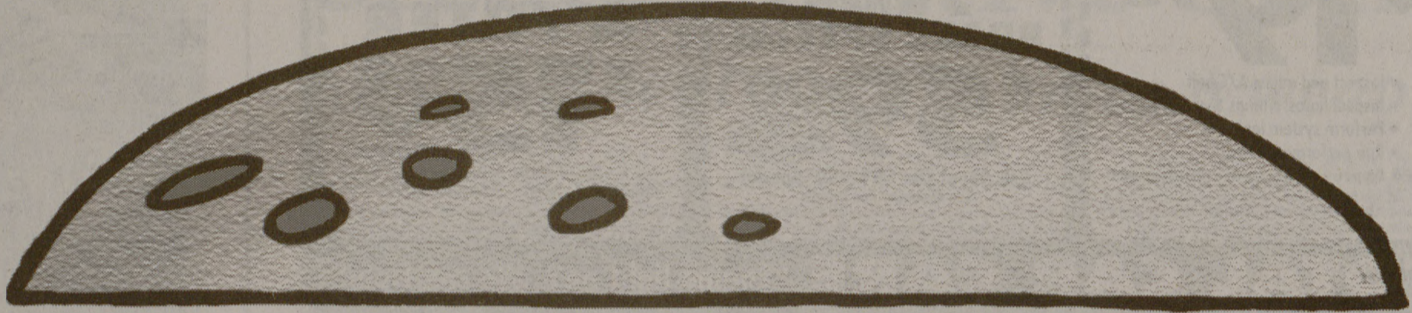
While Deutsch has every right to convey his personal opinions, provided, he expresses them as such, his use of the word "understandably" implies some sort of factual basis for his assertions.

Furthermore, even if Deutsch claims to have religious justification for denouncing abortion and homosexuality, I find it hard to believe that being frugal would be committing a sin. Merriam-Webster defines frugal as "characterized by or reflecting economy in the use of resources," which is a quality that is anything but sinful, regardless of religion.

Roberto Gasparini
Class of 2000

Food for thought

Fast food restaurants are not at fault for obesity



In another ridiculous lack of judgment, people now plan to sue fast food companies for causing obesity in adults and children. It is the contention of these people that fast food marketing techniques and products have caused America to become one of the most obese countries in the industrial world. These people are not saying that fast food is healthy however, they are claiming that they have unknowingly eaten these fatty foods and have become overweight. Yet, what they fail to acknowledge is that fast food companies never have claimed to be serving healthy food, and it is wrong to sue a company because either the consumers lack self-control or they have not read the nutritional facts readily accessible from these fast food companies.

In the book *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser, recommends that "Congress should ban all fast food advertising to children under the age of 9," according to a CBSNEWS.com article. While Schlosser may have the children's best interest at heart, he does not acknowledge the real problem: the necessity of parents educating their children on proper eating habits and exercising control by not allowing children to eat such unhealthy foods. Instead, Schlosser passes the blame to fast food companies by saying it is their job to provide healthy foods for children.

Schlosser is naive, it is not their job. Companies are in business to make a profit, and if fatty foods are in demand, then companies have every right to provide the public with what it demands.

Columnist Susan Ager provides an example in her article about Nicole Volta Avery, who compared fast food companies to

tobacco companies. Her theory is that people are able to sue the tobacco companies because smoking causes health problems, so they should be able to sue

the fast food companies as well. While overconsumption of fast food may be to blame for many serious health problems such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and serious gallbladder problems, the difference between the tobacco companies and the fast food companies is that the fast food companies have never claimed their product is healthy. The tobacco companies withheld vital information about the health risks associated with smoking from the public and therefore are subject to lawsuits by the public. It has never been said that a hamburger from a certain fast food chain has any good health benefits, and it has never been withheld from the public that the hamburger is unhealthy. Many of these fast food restaurants have healthy items marked on their menus, but they never claim all their food is healthy.

The reason many Americans are overweight is not because of "evil" fast food companies. Instead, the reason is that Americans are always rushed for time. While many Americans are coming home from work late at night or taking a quick lunch break, in place of a healthy meal, they grab a bite to eat from the local fast food restaurant. It is the American lifestyle that has caused the epidemic of overweight people. It is a shame that people would rather blame others for their problems. The real problem is lack of self-control and lack of proper eating time, not the fast food corporations.



BRIENNE PORTER



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ANGELIQUE FORD • THE BATTALION

Legalization is realistic

The United States has conducted an expensive and largely futile war against illegal drugs for decades. Yet these substances, despite a massive effort to combat them on the streets and along the borders, still are readily available. There is simply too much demand in this lucrative market. Some drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, are probably too dangerous for the government to indirectly endorse through legalization. However, a smoke of hypocrisy surrounds the continued criminalization of marijuana. It should be legalized and regulated just like another harmful substance to society and the individual: alcohol.

The U.S. government again would have to prohibit alcohol to maintain any shred of consistency. This realization finally is getting to the mainstream of America's politicians. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg now prominently is featured in an ad by the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws because of a quote he said last summer as a candidate. Asked if he had ever smoked pot, Bloomberg replied, "You bet I did. And I liked it." In his city alone, more than 52,000 people were arrested for possession last year, up from 720 people 10 years ago. Nationwide, 735,000 people were arrested for breaking marijuana laws in 2000. That is a lot of arrests for non-violent offenders who pose little or no harm to others.

There are, of course, millions of more casual users who do not get caught or are



JONATHAN JONES

not prosecuted. The vast majority of these individuals has no difficulty fully functioning from day to day. "Just Say No" may have a nice ring to it, but a drug-free America is unattainable and wholly unrealistic. As such, it is long past time for an intellectually honest debate about the impact of America's drug laws. The robust marijuana black market is at the root of at least one long-time and avoidable crisis.

Prison overcrowding is a problem in America. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice statistics, 40 states were under court order to end overcrowding in 1994. Two years later, the federal prison system was operating at 25 percent over capacity, while state prisons were running at 16 to 24 percent over capacity. Overcrowding strains budgets, which negatively impacts job training, education and drug treatment. The result, unfortunately, is high recidivism. The Bureau of Justice calculated that 37,500 federal, state and local inmates were imprisoned for cannabis violations in 1998, a majority for possession alone. At an average cost of \$20,000 a year, the government spent \$750 million to incarcerate these offenders. The effort to stop individuals from using a product hardly any more harmful than alcohol costs taxpayers billions annually.

An individual inclined to escape reality through substance abuse will find a way to do so. Alcohol addiction, all too common in the United States and elsewhere, is particularly dangerous because it often leads to

aggressive behavior where individuals ignore their altered states and attempt to perform tasks as if sober. Generally, this is simply not the case with marijuana. It is a shame that ignorance or fear of political consequences hinder a national debate about the merits of regulating marijuana. A 1999 Gallup Poll found that 73 percent of Americans favored legalization for medicinal purposes. The Marijuana Policy Project estimates that the war on marijuana costs taxpayers \$9.2 billion annually. Even the government can find better ways to spend that money.

The policy of policing adults at leisure if they who are not driving or operating heavy machinery, is as barren of results as it is rich in irony. The same government that permits Americans to soften the edges of modern life through alcohol, cigarettes and a variety of prescription drugs, most of which are more harmful and addictive than marijuana, should end this double standard. At the same time, legality should not imply approval. The use of drugs usually leads to serious negative consequences. But as long as humans continue to be imperfect creatures, there will be drugs. A little time- and money-saving consistency, however, is a good start to honestly addressing the massive failure of America's war on drugs.

Jonathan Jones is a senior political science major.