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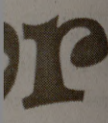
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# OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 7B • Thursday, April 10, 2003

## Protesters should join the military

(U-WIRE) NORMAN, Okla. — A few weeks ago I witnessed several students, faculty and staff members rallying at a pro-war demonstration near the South Oval. My stance, position and/or opinions on the war are irrelevant because I don't believe I can examine the motives for the war impartially.

The pro-war rally amazed me because people were assembled in the Oval with poster boards and cardboard signs out there loud and proud, making their opinions known and their voices heard. But that's not what amazed me. What really "shocked and awed" me was the fact that all these people were still here in Norman, Okla., and not over in Afghanistan, Kuwait or Iraq.

All that hoopla about war and protecting the freedoms of people, one would expect these same people to be serving in the trenches of Kuwait, the caves of Afghanistan or on the front lines in Iraq.

One would suspect that they'd be proudly serving in the armed forces wearing camouflage fatigues and the symbol of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness on their lapel. Instead, they were gathered near the South Oval! The fact of the matter is one shouldn't merely "talk about it" instead one should "be about it."

So many of the pro-war demonstrators have never served a day in the armed forces and/or have never and will never encounter life threatening situations that require the use of weapons for protection and salvation.

No, these people who rally for war are staunch conservatives and neo-conservatives that pray for war in hopes of

keeping the battle as far away from them as possible. While young men and women looking for a fresh start, financial stability or a tangible means of demonstrating their patriotism for our country, the people who rally for the war are enjoying the luxury of residing in Norman. "The mean streets" of Norman. Oh, the turmoil they must feel for being in such a volatile environment like the University of Oklahoma where they are required to attend classes and deal with the harsh realities that the stress caused from multiple assignments could eventually lead to an ulcer or, even worse, death.

The pro-war demonstrators enjoy living the high life over here, while our soldiers (the true patriots) are putting their lives on the line every day in a foreign land. Can you imagine some of the high-class bourgeois being in some remote land without the luxuries of a credit card sized cell phone and a state of the art wireless Ethernet connection? They would probably lose their minds. The reality is that people like my sister are over there fighting for this country and whatever decisions our president makes, they are not simply just rallying with pieces of cardboard.

People have the right to assemble. Equally, in this country, people have the right to speak freely without harm. These are a few rights that we are guaranteed by the United States Constitution's Bill of Rights. I just wish the people who are stalwart pro-war lobbyists would strap on a helmet, put on some fatigues and grab a weapon. Fight for your beliefs. Don't just talk about them.

Andrew Legrand is a columnist at the University of Oklahoma.

# TUNE THEM OUT

Bush administration need not listen to opinion polls

When former President Truman dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, it was an action done without public opinion polls dictating how the matter should be handled.



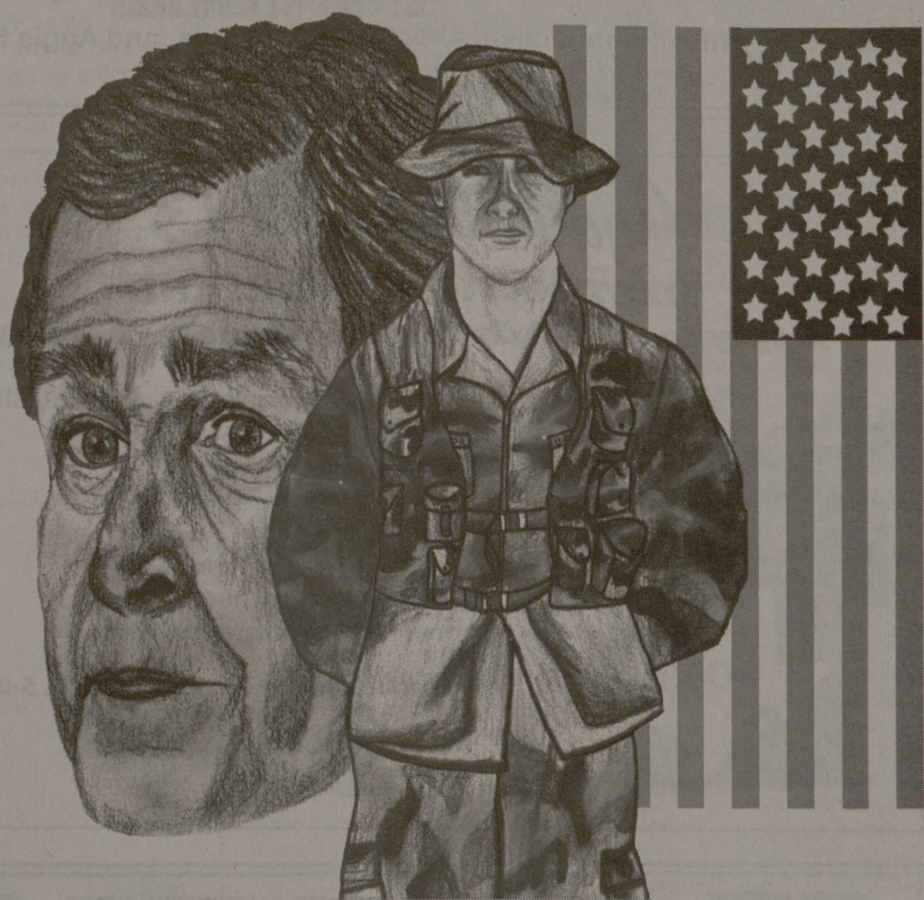
SARA FOLEY

Disregarding the public support, the U.S. military acted independently, and by doing so, expedited the conclusion of World War II. Yet, in 1973, the final American troops departed from Vietnam, leaving a poorly equipped nation to defend itself. Although many political and military components factored into the decision to withdraw troops, a major element was the massive public opposition to the war.

Since that point, even the most aggressive of presidents has been reluctant to fight any battle with all of America's strength due to possible public resistance. The chance of America being seen as an aggressor by other countries and its own citizens is a risk few presidents want to take. However, public opinion should not dictate the actions of the president or the military, and the attacks that this current conflict demand should not be softened.

The United States entered this war with high goals and lofty diplomatic phrases such as "Iraqi liberation," in efforts to convince the public that the U.S. acts of aggression against Iraq were rational and humanitarian. While the United States does have honorable goals behind the attack on Iraq, the bottom line is one of self protection against weapons of mass destruction. Defending the interests of the United States and other countries that are not strong enough to safeguard themselves is not a poor decision. The problem arises in the mound of mixed messages not only sent by the military itself, but by the media and the government. The United States has simultaneously killed thousands of Iraqis and provided relief for them. This attempt to repair the damage done by sending aid is hardly effective. While this may be demonstrative of the sympathy expressed by many Americans, its true origins lie in an attempt to boost public opinion by convincing members of the United Nations, as well as the American public, that the United States is benevolent while it attacks.

If America continues to offer relief and to only attack Iraqi targets reluctantly, it weakens our effort. True strength would



be shown if America did not attempt to please everyone, and did not offer relief to those regimes it is trying to overthrow.

The plight of the suppressed Iraqis does invoke pity, but the removal of that tyranny was one of the main motives for this war. If the Iraqi forces continue to observe our sympathy and assistance, instead of our determination, they won't feel the need for surrender as sharply. The Iraqi submission will be more eminent if America shows its strength by not offering to help them until they have surrendered. Assistance can be given once Saddam Hussein's regime has been removed, and only through this policy will the conclusion of war be accelerated.

The conflict with Iraq is not a diplomatic strategy or a simple military occupation. It is war, and the American public should expect the military to continue to treat it as one.

Now, as public support of military action is fluctuating, it is not necessary to add in more relief packages or to institute more propaganda to convince the American public of the need for this war.

The need is evident enough already. The unavoidable truth is that there will be those supporting the war and those against it, and it is impossible to please everyone.

Both sides hold their own points that everyone agrees with. No one wants any U.S. soldiers to die and no one wants Saddam in control or more terrorist attacks to occur, and both of these points can run in circles with no solution being found. However, it is not the public's job to debate if this war is worth fighting. The Bush administration has already decided that for the public. Now it is the public's job to attempt to stay informed and support the actions of a military that protects their freedoms.

Sara Foley is a sophomore journalism major. Graphic by Becky Maiden.

MAIL CALL

There are other places with human rights violations

It seems every day brings a new letter asking "How can you oppose a war to liberate people from a horrible man like Saddam Hussein?" I have seen it compared to stopping Hitler or Stalin a number of times. To these people I ask, where was your voice the last ten years? Where were you when 600,000 people were slaughtered in Rwanda? Where was your voice when Bosnian Serbs filled mass graves in Srebrenica? Where was your voice when the Albanians were being "cleansed" in Kosovo?

Do the words Haiti, Iran, North Korea or Somalia ring a bell? If you are so concerned about the human rights abuses taking place they should. If it is Republicans, led by President Bush, determined to stop the madness in Iraq it was the same Republicans who said the United States is not the world's policeman. "We can't be all things to all people. We are not nation builders," were the words Bush used repeatedly in the 2000 Presidential debates while explaining why he would not have sent ground troops into Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda or the Balkans.

Saddam Hussein is an evil man, let there be no question. But evil similar to his exists in places the world over. If we are in Iraq to liberate people from evil then to those people so vocally professing how noble this action is I say don't lose your voice when the suffering takes place in a country with no oil reserves.

Nicholas Franklin Class of 2003

Aggie Nights program is a good alternative

In response to Matthew Maddox's April 7 column:

Coming out of Fish Camp in fall of 2001, I struggled to find a place on campus. The more I tried

to fit in with my new Fish Camp friends and leaders, the further I fell into a wasteland of hypocrisy and disillusionment.

When I discovered a more non-threatening and better yet, alcohol-free activity, namely Aggie Nights, it was a breath of fresh air in what proved to be a turbulent freshman experience. I now felt like I fit in somewhere, and had a place to go where I wouldn't be pressured to engage in illegal activities. I'm not saying that Aggie Nights is a cure-all for problems associated with the college party culture, but it is a popular, cheap, and relieving form of entertainment, especially for the silent masses who have better things to do with their time and money than to use it to destroy their own brain cells. If Matthew Maddox could find a better way to use the relatively minuscule amount of funding required to sustain Aggie Nights, I'd like to see him lobbying for it rather than flaming such a successful social program in the opinion section of the Battalion.

Daniel Lewis Class of 2005

New war is shorter and quicker than Gulf War was

In response to Justin Hill's April 8 column:

I honestly don't know if you are mixing your own opinion about this war, or are trying to objectively report that of others, but I'd guess the former. First, you make it seem as if two weeks is a long time for a war. The Bush administration was definitely optimistic about the war, and why wouldn't they be? We have 300,000+ soldiers on the ground at this moment, along with thousands of coalition troops.

We have the most advanced war machinery in the entire world. However, no high ranking official at any moment, specified a definite deadline for this war. You quoted Time Magazine, as reporting that "the administration gave the impression it had devised a Teflon war: quick, easy, relatively bloodless."

In addition, you say that the true colors have shown, and that the optimistic outlook has been debunked. Here are some statistics for you, since

you seem bent on appearing uninformed: Gulfwar U.S. Casualties: 293. Wounded: 467. Cost of Gulf War: \$102 billion. Planes lost: 63. Iraqi soldier casualties: 100,000. Gulf War length: 42 days. Also, lets not forget, WWII claimed 407,000 American lives. Comparing these statistics to Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. casualties: 96, cost: \$80 billion, Current Length: 20 days. By all accounts, at this very moment, this war is going to be quick, easy, and relatively bloodless. Not to mention, the tax payers will be partially reimbursed for the cost after we start reorganizing the infrastructure of Iraq with oil money.

Evan Gardner Class of 2005

Financial problems are more pressing than diversity

In response to the UniDiversity ad in Monday's newspaper:

I am appalled that the University had the temerity to advertise the thousands of dollars it is squandering on "UniDiversity Day" while in the same breath asking the legislature for more money, raising tuition and telling students it cannot keep classroom doors open this summer.

The notion of diversity is a fine ideal, but, as Dr. Gates has said, priorities must be made. I believe it reasonable to think the University can pursue diversity goals—however maligned they may be—without spending thousands of dollars on an event that will likely attract only a small percentage of the student body.

Students should be taking a close look at how the University spends money as it claims to be in severe financial straits. At least those of us graduating in May can take solace in knowing we will no longer have finance Gates' liberal manifesto.

Brady Creel Graduate Student

Coverage of women's championship was lacking

As an avid basketball fan, I was excited to see the Battalion's coverage of the men's NCAA championship game on the front page of Tuesday's paper.

However, I was equally disappointed when I could not find a single word in the Wednesday Battalion about the excellent match-up in the women's championship between the perennial powers Tennessee and Connecticut. The media has the power to shape society's perceptions of what is important and what is not, and your paper consistently sends a clear message: men count, women don't. I understand that not every story can make the cut, but if there's room for men, why isn't there room for women?

Amanda Thompson Class of 2003

Masters should include women

I don't plan on watching The Masters this year. I am an avid golfer, and regularly keep up with the PGA tour, but this year, the tournament has met a catalyst: Martha Burke. Augusta National has always been a sexist club.

However, our times have changed. Same-sex clubs are permitted to admit only men as members, guaranteed by our constitution. This argument isn't about laws however.

With all of the pomp and circumstance surrounding the tournament, Augusta National should go one step beyond our law. Augusta's members should realize they have a moral obligation to invite women as members. There are no morals in being discriminatory against one gender.

The USGA allows females to play in its PGA tournaments, what is the big deal in keeping the tournament at a sexist club? The USGA, normally supportive of gender equality in golf, has remained quiet on this issue. If you believe that these men should change how they operate, write the USGA to persuade them to change the location of the tournament. Until a change, in ethics or location, I'm not interested in the tournament.

Kevin Sullivan Class of 2004