

# OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 5B • Thursday, April 17, 2003

## EDITORIAL

### AGE DISCRIMINATION

#### Students must have a voice

"No taxation without representation" was the rally cry for the American Revolution, one that changed the balance of power in the colonies forever. Despite being more than 220 years old, there is no statement more pertinent to current local politics.

The College Station City Council has managed to marginalize the very citizens who put the "college" in College Station. Now, the council is attempting to remove the right of Aggies to take an active role in the government.

According to College Station Mayor Ron Silvia, portions of the council believe that citizens over the age of 17 but under 21 lack the maturity to serve as council members, so the council is considering raising the age requirement from 18 to 21.

The sad irony of this comment is that numerous local citizens and Aggies under 21 are deployed overseas, risking their lives so that democracy might flourish. That is a true litmus test of maturity, and one that does not discriminate between 18- and 21-year-olds.

Students must attend the April 24 meeting of the College Station City Council to let the Council know that a town made up of college students will not stand for barring the majority of those students from seeking office. Most importantly, on election day, students can show that they are not just a source of revenue, but a constituency to be represented.

## THE BATTALION

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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 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 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647. Email: mailcall@thebatt.com

### MAIL CALL

#### Admissions should not be a numbers game

In response to the April 14 front page article "Top 10 percent plan under fire":

The Battalion misrepresented the capacity in which I was quoted for the article. The Battalion reporter who interviewed me did not inform me that I would be quoted as the spokesman for the African-American Student Coalition, a position I no longer hold and have not held for several months. Furthermore, to clarify the out-of-context quote attributed to me in the article, it is clear that students admitted to universities under athletic scholarships are admitted under a different set of standards taking into account the other assets they bring to the table (i.e., their athletic ability) and there is nothing wrong with that because admissions should not be purely a numbers game (SAT scores and GPAs) as socioeconomic factors beyond the control of applicants can influence those supposed measures of potential.

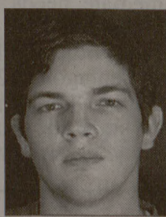
However, students from diverse backgrounds whether

the diversity of their backgrounds are based on other talents, socioeconomic status, ethnicity/race, geographical origin, or other factors also bring valuable assets to the table and as such should be granted the same consideration as athletes.

The merit only opponents of affirmative action do not seem to mind athletes who are black, for example, being admitted under a set of standards that differ from the set of standards that the general applicant pool is subjected to even though the merit of those athletes may be wholly non-academic in nature (i.e., their athletic ability). Yet students in the general applicant pool who are black, for example, are apparently not entitled to the same consideration of their non-academic assets in the admissions process (i.e., the diverse and valuable perspectives that they would bring to a university setting). That was the inconsistency to which I was referring.

Berekat Bisrat  
Class of 2004

#### France should have no part



DAVID SHOEMAKER

Now that Allied forces have penetrated deep into Iraq, people in the United States, the United Kingdom and other allied capitals are beginning to plan for the future of post-war Iraq. There are others, notably in places such as Paris, who are also making similar plans. As details of the U.S.-led plans have begun to leak out, France has made it clear that U.S. leadership in postwar Iraq would be unacceptable. If such a resolution came to the United Nations, it would be vetoed.

The French are trying to thwart the United States to protect their own interests. The country is seeking to avoid large economic losses from deals previously made with Saddam Hussein.

For example, according to an article in the International Herald Tribune, TotalFinaElf, a large French oil firm, made a deal with Saddam giving Elf rights to Iraqi oil after the Gulf War sanctions were lifted. Elf does not have close ties only to Saddam, but also to French President Jacques Chirac.

Also according to the Tribune, one of Elf former executives, Loik Le Floch-Pringet, admitted he gave money to Chirac's political party during his tenure. Le Floch-Pringet was quoted as saying, "There were politicians who didn't want to favor Elf. We had to keep them quiet, to have them on our side." It seems that the French government has a vested interest in the international law making the United States' actions in Iraq illegal as they have making sure they keep their contracts.

However, now that Saddam is no longer in control, France is afraid the contract will be dishonored by a new Iraqi government, especially one unfriendly to the trappings of the old regime. One French diplomat was quoted in the Tribune saying that French firms know Iraq well, it is just their "contacts and allies tend to be linked with Ba'ath party rulers, who are liable to be on the wrong side in a new Iraq." The French are also afraid that a new Iraqi government will dishonor loans made by France and its corporations to Saddam. According to an article in the Houston Chronicle, the postwar government will need to write off many loans to reduce its large debt.

The French seem to be hoping that if they can steer the reconstruction effort under the cover of the United Nations, then maybe they can avoid activities that will hurt their interest. The United Nations needs to avoid becoming a cover for the French and help preserve what status it still has with the Bush Administration.

The United Nations can and should have a place in postwar Iraq, but not if it is going to be a cover for France and other countries, such as Russia, to secure an advantage. The ultimate goal should be what White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer was quoted as saying in an article by the Tribune: "that the Iraqi people administer Iraq." But until they are able to do so, the Allies and the United Nations should join forces to run the country.

According to an article in the Houston Chronicle, British Prime Minister Tony Blair has been trying to build support for a United Nations-backed civil authority in Iraq. The Bush Administration has already made preparations for a military administration for the immediate period after the war, but has yet to decide how long it should operate and what role the United Nations will play.

The United Nations has important skills and experience to offer, especially in the areas of humanitarian aid and rebuilding of infrastructure. But its ability to show good political leadership would be compromised by the fact that Russia and France have extensive ties to the old regime. If the goal is to remove all ties to Saddam, the fact that United Nations decision-making might be influenced by France might not be in the best interest of the Iraqi people. The United States and its allies would be a better choice for the political responsibilities. One complaint that some countries will have with a coalition-supervised political administration is the fact that they will probably decide to award many necessary business contracts to firms in allied countries.

But there is no good reason for the allies, who have borne the brunt of political criticism and human casualties, to allow the end of the war to enrich those who opposed it. There is a place for the United Nations in post-war Iraq. But there is no place for the French to derail Iraq's escape from dictatorship so they can make a buck.

David Shoemaker is a junior business management major.  
Graphic by Becky Maiden.

# REBUILDING IRAQ

#### Let the Iraqi people decide

The war is drawing to a close.

According to major news sources, Saddam Hussein's regime is finished. Fox News has already reported that some soldiers will begin the journey home in a matter of days. In their place will be a coalition of people, resources and, hopefully, a sound plan for the future of Iraq. In America, many questions have sprung up concerning the rebuilding of Iraq. Should the United Nations be involved? Should France, Germany or Russia be involved? Should the "coalition of the willing" finish the job without help? The answer to all these questions is simple: ask the Iraqis.

Forget all this rubbish about whether France or the United Nations should be involved in the rebuilding. All of these arguments leave out the most important part of the equation — what do the Iraqi people want and what countries or organizations do they want to provide it?

But no one seems to want to ask them. They are the biggest variable, yet they seem to have been marginalized by world groups. According to Fox News, the French and English have agreed that the United Nations will have a central role in the future of Iraq. The United Nations has not stopped to think that given its pathetic record with rebuilding countries, the Iraqis might not want it inside their borders. Instead the United Nations assumes it can just waltz into Iraq, start putting together a government and throw in some humanitarian aid. But maybe the Iraqis want that.

There is no one better than the Iraqis to determine what countries and organizations should help administer their country.

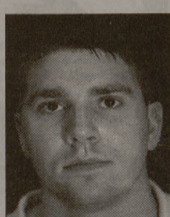
From the pro-war American standpoint it could seem outrageous to let either the United Nations or France help with the reconstruction of Iraq. But one must keep two things in mind. The main goals for which the "coalition of the willing" strived were simple: to eliminate the security threat posed by Saddam and to liberate the Iraqi people. Saddam is no longer a threat. The Iraqi people have been liberated. The future of Iraq should be up to the Iraqis.

Interestingly enough, this situation is reminiscent of a stand-up routine that appeared on Comedy Central a few weeks ago. Todd Barry, a short, balding, monotone voiced comedian, wrapped up his act by asking the women in the audience a question and then gauging their response. Recalling the rumor that Brad Pitt does not like to shower or bathe regularly, he presented this scenario: "Let's say that Brad hasn't showered in a year and a half, and has just run the Boston Marathon. I, on the other hand, have just taken a shower, deep conditioned my hair, and walked through a carwash — now, who would you rather sleep with?" His self-deprecating humor was well received by the audience and, in this hypothetical scenario, all the women picked Todd.

Politically and physically, the French have not bathed in 20 years. When it comes to Iraq, France's laundry is dirtier than Monica Lewinsky's — but enough about hygiene. The country has supported the murderous, tyrannous regime of Saddam for years. Many in the world, in an attempt to discredit the United States and the United Kingdom entry into Iraq, shout "Blood for Oil!" Considering how many barrels of Iraqi oil have flowed into France for the last 20 years, coupled with the fact that France supported the vicious dictator to the 11th hour, how many barrels of innocent Iraqi blood also should be shipped to France? Barrel for barrel seems appropriate. The United Nations is crippled and impotent. Led by France, the organization has successfully thwarted any real action against Saddam under the guise of peace, but the Iraqi people are not stupid. They will soon realize that they have been nothing but pawns—expendable, useless to the French and to the world, except for Britain and America.

Given the choice, will the Iraqis choose France and the United Nations or the United States and Great Britain? Make no mistake about it, the choice should be left with the Iraqis no matter how much Americans may ultimately dislike it. The Iraqis have the most at stake. At the end of the day, French President Jacques Chirac will sleep in France and President George W. Bush in America, but Iraqis will sleep in Iraq. The least the world can do is to give these people, who have suffered the reign of a vicious dictator for 20 years, the chance to have some voice in their new country.

Mike Ward is a senior history major.



MIKE WARD

