

Militants
no
rrender

Louis Meixler
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALEM — Two
an militant group
ble for most of the
ings against Israeli
day they will not see
their weapons despite
e and warned that
to disarm them could
wn the truce with Israel
s and Islamic Jihad
warning in a joint state
The Associated Press in
and accused the
n Authority of bowing
demands it disarm the
— a step Israel says it
for the 2-week-old
ce to hold.

ugh Palestinian Prime
Mahmoud Abbas says
ot order security forces
the militants for fear of
police seized some
this weekend in the
p, a Palestinian security
id, in what appeared
effort to comply with
d.

nsions came as Israeli
linister Ariel Sharon
to Europe for meetings
S.-backed "road map"
n, and as Israeli and
n security forces
for an Israeli taxi driver
snapped by Palestinian
aiming for a prisoner
Israel.

allah, Abbas and
ian Foreign Minister
v appealed to Israel to
asser Arafat from his
use arrest. Abbas has
ing for freedom of
for Arafat since taking
remier April 30.

said it was important
relations with Arafat
restrictions imposed
ement are unacceptable.

has been stuck for
months in his office
t his Ramallah com-
which was mostly
by Israel's military
sition is that he may
ad, but he might not be
return.

nd the United States
ting Arafat, charging
involved in terrorism
es that charge.

ew to London, where
o tell British leaders
t with Arafat under-
national peace efforts
claims, Arafat is trying
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Israeli relations have
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delegates from travel-
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VS IN BRIEF

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AP) — A leading
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Moatti, an author-
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OPINION

THE BATTALION

EDITORIAL

THE END OF AN ERA

Closing journalism department will come at a high price

Following two years of rhetoric about the fate of the journalism department, Dr. Charles Johnson, dean of liberal arts, announced Thursday his recommendation that the department and its associated degree programs be closed during the next few years. The decision, expected to be approved by Texas A&M officials, comes as a slap in the face not only to students and faculty involved with the department, but to all A&M students, past and present.

Claiming the closure was "the most effective way to address our students' needs in journalism," Johnson announced his decision at a journalism faculty meeting that A&M officials told The Battalion would be "just a departmental meeting." While many expected the department's closure to be announced, the death of the journalism department can hardly be regarded as business as usual. The decision, however well-thought, will come at a great price for A&M and with many repercussions, some that are clear now and some that won't be clear for years to come.

Johnson said no tenured, tenure track faculty or permanent staff members will be lost. However, a gradual cessation of funding to the department will mean that many who currently teach classes simply won't have jobs offered to them in coming semesters. Many more faculty members will be shifted to other departments, losing any stability their job previously afforded them. Some may not even want to remain at A&M, assuming they even have that option.

Students, too, will suffer from the department's closure. While no students currently enrolled in the major will be kicked out, the class of 2007 could be the last class to graduate with a degree in journalism. But even that possibility has to be approved by Executive Vice President and Provost Dr. David Prior, A&M President Dr. Robert M. Gates and the A&M University System Board of Regents.

And while journalism courses will still be taught, it will be in a limited fashion. The administrative end of the department and the journalism major itself will be lost. One can only imagine how much potential students interested in journalism and liberal arts will be dissuaded from attending A&M by Johnson's decision. It also doesn't lend much value to a degree in journalism coming from a school that will soon be without a journalism department. While diversity of color is rightly encouraged in Imperative Six of Vision 2020, diversity of thought, apparently, is not, as is evident in the loss of a department vital to A&M's liberal arts program.

As Johnson said Thursday, "The bottom line is how we can serve students." But actions need to match words, and the closing of a department that has been at A&M since 1948 is not a service to students. It is a disservice and an insult.

THE BATTALION

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Power of privilege

Cheney misusing executive privilege on energy policy

Last Tuesday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia rejected a request by Vice President Dick Cheney to block the discovery process ordered by a lower court in a lawsuit filed against him by Judicial Watch, a conservative government watchdog group, and the Sierra Club, an environmental group. The lawsuit concerns the makeup of the National Energy Policy Development Group over which Cheney presided. The NEPDG generated the vastly industry-oriented energy legislation that President George W. Bush presented to Congress in May 2001.



JENELLE WILSON

On the surface, the battle of NEPDG is about who was on the task force. The government claims it was made up of only government officials, such as cabinet secretaries and agency and senior presidential aides. Judicial Watch and the Sierra Club maintain that industry leaders such as Kenneth Lay, the former chairman of Enron, and Thomas Kuhn, the president of the Edison Electric Institute that represents investor-owned electric utilities, essentially became de-facto members of the group. If these non-government industry leaders were members, the Federal Advisory Committee Act requires that the group's activity be open to the public, which it was not.

The lawsuit, however, embodies a much larger concern. The real issue at stake in the lawsuit is what exactly the public is entitled to know about its government and what the executive branch is allowed to conceal.

The executive branch of government must be able to conduct some of its business with a high degree of confidentiality — especially if that business regards national security — but such confidentiality is not and must not be absolute. The people have a right to know when, how and why the executive carries out its duties to accurately evaluate those decisions.

If specific factions are driving executive decisions while other interests are being shut out of the process, the people have a right to know. Secrecy regarding this energy policy, which in no way involved national security, is ludicrous and highly suspicious.

The people must know why the government does things to trust their elected decision makers in a republic. Secrecy is absolutely contrary to the democratic principles this nation was founded on. On Aug. 4, 1822, James Madison wrote that "popular Government, without proper information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance."

In secrecy lies danger and corruption, not anything remotely resembling an honest and open democratic society.

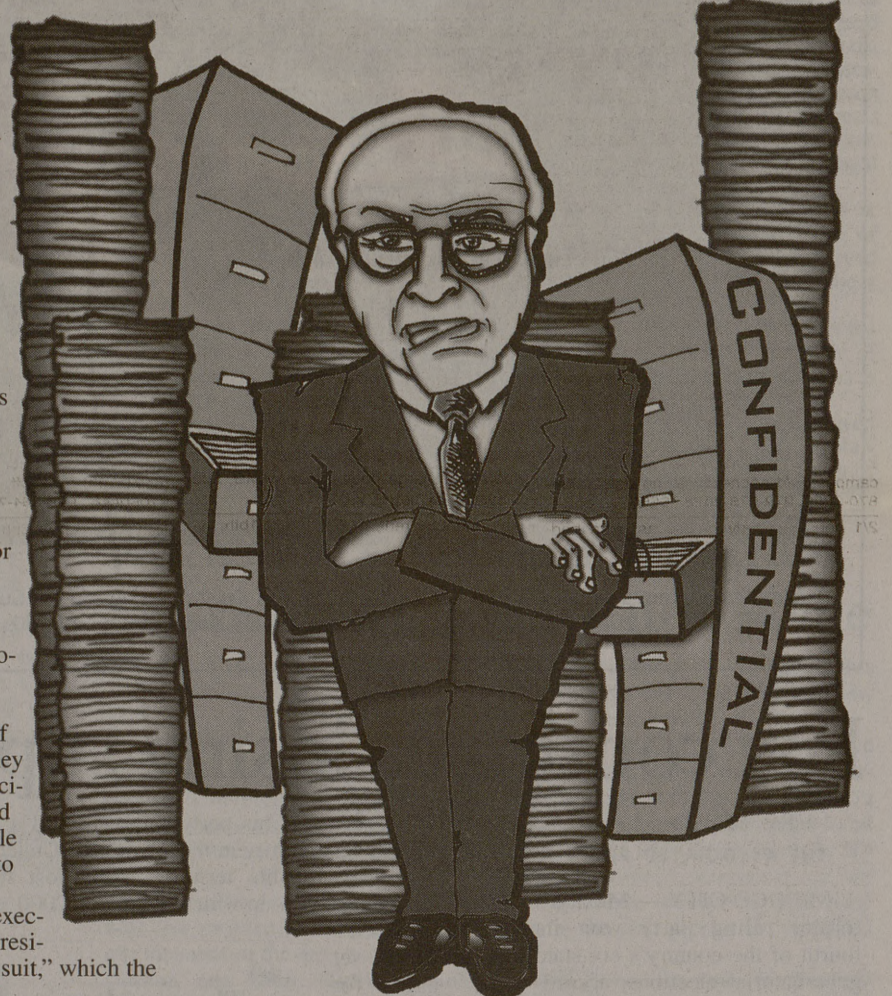
In October 2002, District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan ruled that Cheney must turn over records of NEPDG activity or detail why it is privileged; Cheney has refused to do either. Instead, he appealed the decision to the Court of Appeals, a move the court called extraordinary and drastic. He wanted the court to rule that the information was privileged without having to ever actually invoke executive privilege. To do so, according to the court decision, would transform, "executive privilege from a doctrine designed to protect presidential communications into virtual immunity from suit," which the

court was unwilling to do. Had it done so, the executive could do whatever it wanted without much oversight or accountability. It would have also increased executive power at the expense of the other branches of government, according to a decision written by Sullivan early in July, 2002, regarding the matter. Suddenly, America would no longer be a republic with three coequal branches of government; it would be a dictatorship, or at the least, an oligarchy.

This concern about executive secrecy — and government secrecy in general — is not a partisan issue. The Sierra Club and Judicial Watch are opposites sides of the aisle on most issues; one mostly endorses Democrats, while the other is a conservative group. On this issue, however, they agree that people have the right to know what private interests are driving the production of public policies that will affect everyone.

If the Bush administration is going to continue to tout democracy around the world, it has to practice what it preaches. It is impossible to have rule by the people if government officials are withholding information that will have as drastic an impact on many aspects of public life — the economy, the environment and health — as an energy policy would have. People deserve to know the truth about who exactly is making these decisions and why.

Jenelle Wilson is a senior political science major. Graphic by Gracie Arenas



MAIL CALL

Closing of journalism department 'outrageous'

Okay, that's it. I am completely and utterly fed up with Texas A&M and its administration. First, it was Bonfire, but I'm not going to rehash that argument here. Second was James Reynolds' vindictive decision to disband MSC Cepheid Variable and end Aggiecon — an institution more than 34 years old — despite the fact that the program paid for itself year in and year out. But now, the asinine decision to disband journalism at A&M is so utterly offensive to me and every other journalism graduate ever to pass through A&M that words do not exist to adequately convey my outrage.

I was a student when Dr. Charles Self was lured from Alabama with the grand — and ultimately empty — promise of establishing a journalism graduate school only to suffer repeated budget and faculty cuts while other liberal arts departments flourished.

Dr. Charles Johnson's bizarre claim that A&M journalism students would be better served by "specialization" in a non-journalism major with the equivalent of a journalism minor is a slap in the face of every A&M journalism graduate. It is condescending and offensive, and shows an utter and complete disconnect with reality.

Johnson's statement that "A growing body of evidence shows that many prominent and award-winning journalists came from varied academic backgrounds other than journalism," puts him on par with the crowd insisting the U.S. lunar landings were faked by Hollywood. For Johnson to attempt to bully the existing faculty by ordering them to keep this development secret from former students flies in the face of everything A&M stands for and

should not be tolerated. No matter how hard A&M tries, there is absolutely no way to make a silk purse out of this sow's ear. Loren Steffy is absolutely correct when he says no employer will seriously consider A&M grads for journalism positions in the future. The competition and demands are simply too high to go with a job candidate from a school where journalism is relegated to an afterthought.

And in all honesty, since when is high enrollment in a program considered a negative? Instead of pumping untold millions into that dying beast known as petroleum engineering, A&M should join the 21st century and fund the programs students actually want and need.

This decision, I'm afraid, will have long-reaching ramifications that A&M is not considering. As a 10-year veteran of newspaper journalism, I can say without any hesitation that school affiliation has a tremendous impact on story balance and story prominence in any of our communicative media. With A&M journalism graduates in positions of influence, A&M's interests are protected and promoted.

This shortsighted decision will remove A&M journalists from that equation in years to come. The impact will be subtle at first, but A&M will most definitely suffer for it.

I know I am not a major donor to the University, but that has been the result of inability as opposed to desire (another reason, I'm sure, journalism was deemed expendable).

But no more. The desire has effectively been killed.

Over the past few years, A&M has systematically disbanded and destroyed all of my connections with the University. Because of that, I can only assume that A&M does not con-

sider me a worthy member of the A&M family.

So be it. I will never donate another dime to Texas A&M University. I am saving this letter, and in the future, when I am contacted by the Association or other arm of the University requesting money, I shall happily print out another copy of this missive for their edification.

Jayne Blaschke
Class of 1992

Diversity necessary for a quality education

In response to Michael Ward's July 10 column:

In his July 10 opinion article "Affirmative action and the multi-ethnic elite," Michael Ward displays an embarrassing interpretation of American history when stating that "if diversity is so necessary for a quality education, as the Supreme Court suggests, how does one explain the preeminence of the Ivy League colleges?"

He then suggests that since the Ivy League schools were the preeminent institutions for years without any minority enrollment, that diversity is not necessary for a quality education.

I'll first point out that the Ivy League schools were the nation's first universities, so they largely became the preeminent institutions of higher learning because there were no other schools with which to compete.

I'd also suggest that no institution founded today on the principles of only letting in "the sons of wealthy white men" would ever rise to pre-eminence.

I would argue that even here at Texas A&M, our University has done nothing but improve its academic and public reputation since first allowing women to enroll in 1963 and admitting the first minority student in 1964.

These were all attempts to achieve "diversity" and current efforts toward that goal are only an extension of that longstanding goal of having a student body better representative of the public at large.

Many critics of affirmative action point out the unfairness of favoritism in the selection process. However, a much longer-standing type of preference involves the one favoring children of alumni.

A Wall Street Journal article (Daniel Golden, Jan. 15, 2003) highlights how much universities favor children of past or prospective donors.

Duke University, for one, annually accepts 100 to 125 underqualified applicants due to family wealth or connections. Harvard accepts 40 percent of legacy applicants, compared to only 11 percent of overall applicants.

This trend is common throughout the nation's elite universities, and it disproportionately favors white applicants. At the University of Virginia, for example, 91 percent of legacy applicants accepted are white, and only 1.6 percent black, 1.6 percent Asian, or 0.5 percent Hispanic.

Such legacy preferences do nothing to advance the notion of fairness or merit. Opponents of affirmative action might consider this when voicing their outrage over the ridiculous notion of leveling out the playing field.

Robert A. Powell
Graduate Student

Diversity more important now than in years past

In response to Michael Ward's July 10 column:

Two hundred fifty years ago, imperialistic nations plundered colonies, women had no rights and slaves still existed.

The argument that because Ivy League schools rose to prominence without diversity in the last 250 years and therefore diversity has no educational value is very misinformed.

The political and social environment of the world has changed. Diversity in colleges may not have been important in 1743, when the majority of people in the United States did not even have access to primary or secondary schools, but surely, that has changed.

The world is not a place where the only opinions that matter come from white men.

Business and governments that matter exist all over the world and are run by women and men of many ethnic variations. By denying the fact that having people who have insight into these cultures is an asset to the United States, we are limiting one of our country's best resources.

By having diversity in the classrooms, people learn how to interact with people of different ethnicities and genders. And as Sandra Day O'Connor said, "break down stereotypes" and "enable (students) to better understand people of different races."

Anu Ratnayake
Class of 2006