

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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PAGE BY • MATT RIGNEY

Spoiled bats

People's safety should take precedence over animals'



TONY PIEDRA - THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Bush's comments were accurate

In response to Adam Scharn's Sept. 17 column:

While Adam Scharn's attempts to defend President Bush's comments about the war on terror during his interview with The Today Show's Matt Lauer read like a solid semantic rebuke of those pundits who pounced on the story, it would appear that Mr. Scharn is in fact guilty of taking the context itself out of context. Note that even Bush tried to play the controversial remark off as just another entry in a long list of verbal fumbles and inarticulate gaffes, saying, "I guess I should have been a little more eloquent." Well, that's probably true, Mr. President.

Ironically, the president's statements may be the first documented case of the president being right about something with regards to the vaguely defined "war on terror" and the ill-conceived conflict in Iraq. As Noam Chomsky has put it: "Bush planners know as well as others that the resort to force increases the threat of terror, and that their militaristic and aggressive posture and actions provoke reactions that increase the risk of catastrophe. They do not desire these outcomes, but assign them low priority in comparison to the international and domestic agendas they make little attempt to conceal." In other words, the war can't be won because war was the wrong strategy in the first place.

Clint Bland
Class of 2005

Bike theft not adequately handled by UPD

In response to Mike Walters' Sept. 20 column:

I would like to thank Mr. Walters for informing us of who is really responsible for our bikes getting stolen. I have had a bicycle stolen, along with my roommate who has had two stolen from him. Each of the bikes was locked. Every time the thefts were reported and nothing was accomplished, UPD said, "We'll look into it" and we never heard another word.

In my opinion, if we can put tracking devices on squirrels, we can bait some thieves by putting similar devices on bicycles. Let's think, TS.

Let's serve the customers. Do something about it. Find out which racks have the most bicycles stolen from them and install surveillance cameras.

Inaction is not going to help. Thieves don't care if the bike is engraved. They care when they get arrested for theft and get convicted.

Justin Thompson
Class of 2005

UPD should shift focus to better serve students

In response to Mike Walters' Sept. 20 column:

I believe, in matters of theft on campus, the responsibility for prevention and prosecution lands squarely on the University Police Department. Unfortunately for students, the resources of the UPD are strapped after equipping their cars with the latest generation of flashing lights and night-vision technology, which I am sure has reduced crime to almost nothing.

However, the rest of UPD's resources are being used to combat the greatest danger to this University: not terrorism or the rampant STI explosion, but underage drinking.

I am sure we all can see that underage drinking is the sole cause of all problems facing this University, including stolen bikes.

Randy Doolittle
Class of 2005

Why should UPD divert their attention away from this very perilous and very profitable situation and concentrate on problem that will not yield them any money whatsoever? An MIP is worth \$200 or more to the UPD whereas a recovered bike isn't worth one red cent.

Furthermore, I would like to personally applaud the UPD's aggressive bike recovery program that has yielded zero bikes recovered out of 37 stolen bikes. Many will say that investigating stolen bikes is a waste of time and resources that the UPD cannot afford. I totally agree. In fact, I also agree that investigating sexual assault, burglary and motor vehicle theft are a total waste of resources that can be better spent on catching minors drinking.

Todd Stewart
Class of 2005

Bush's tax cuts are equitable

In response to John David Blakley's Sept. 20 column:

In Mr. Blakley's column, he seems to repeat the tired Democratic Party assertion that President Bush's tax cuts only favor the wealthy, and they (and tax cuts in general) are the causes of fundamental disparities between the rich and poor within our society.

I am to assume that Mr. Blakley believes that in for taxation to be fair, the rich must pay higher taxes than they are paying now. Writing for the Wall Street Journal, Lawrence Lindsey, a former director of the National Economic Council, notes that before the Reagan tax cuts, the top 1 percent of taxpayers paid 16 percent of all income tax.

Now, this same group pays 32 percent of all income taxes. Additionally, over this same period of time, the top tax rate has been cut from 70 percent to 35 percent. So, if one believes fairness is based on what percentage of the tax base is paid by the richest individuals, then one would have to assume that things are more fair now than they were even before Ronald Reagan, and that raising taxes is not necessarily the recipe for fairness.

Jonathan Shilling
Class of 2005

New Aggies must act with class at football games

While the Texas A&M football team had a good win against Clemson Saturday, the part of the game that the students can control was not the win. Toward the end of the game, whoever was on the third deck started chanting "Hey, ne, ne, ne ... goodbye" and "Overrated" apparently did not realize that we do not do that at A&M. Although you can never control what happens on the field, as Ags, as the Twelfth Man, you must act with class.

We as students can only stand for our team, show that we support them and continue our reputation for being some of the best and most well-mannered fans in the nation. I understand that many young Aggies have never seen a good football team and maybe haven't been taught the correct Aggie code of conduct; this is the fault of older Ags, not theirs. So I'm writing in today to tell younger Ags that as Aggies, we never taunt teams we beat, and we never harass visiting fans.

I know that students as of late have shown less team support and less school spirit. There is much argument over why, but I hope that those who continue to support the team and the 11,000 who failed to show up Saturday for some reason, will act as Aggies have always done: with class.

Almost everyone who grew up in Texas is familiar with the traditional symbols of this state. The Alamo and the bluebonnet have become legendary representations of historical events or moral principles that are important to Texans. However, no such legacy can be found in the state's newest official symbol: the Mexican Free-tailed bat, Texas' official flying mammal.



CINDY
MCREYNOLDS

Even though these bats were already on the endangered species list, the Texas-based organization, Bat Conservation International (BCI), achieved its goal of additional protective legislation in 1995, when it successfully lobbied to have the bats recognized by the state of Texas. The new regulations that emerged are creating unnecessary rabies concerns for Texans. Therefore, the law should be repealed.

According to Montgomery County's animal control department, there have been as many confirmed cases of rabid bats this year as in the past three years combined, and health officials are warning residents to avoid all bats, particularly ones that appear sick. To combat such threats, individuals traditionally turn to extermination in the interest of public health. Prohibiting these measures for the purpose of protecting bats puts humans at risk, as events in the past several years have shown.

One man living in Montgomery County who bought a house inhabited by bats was required to hire a specialist to remove them and test them for rabies before they could be destroyed. Even at Texas A&M, one student had to receive post-exposure treatment after he came in contact with a bat that tested positive for rabies. In response to the situation, University officials issued a press release warning students against approaching or touching any bat that is lying on the ground or otherwise appears unusual.

While educating students on this potential threat is a good idea, school officials as well as other individuals throughout the state should legally be allowed to address the issue of rabid bats

by any means, including extermination. The arguments against doing so are typical of most environmental issues. Activists complain that human encroachment on the bat's habitats is jeopardizing the species and therefore advocate legislative protection.

In one study, BCI states, "The lethal control of bats, even when there is a proven potential danger to humans, often is subjected to careful scrutiny and interagency coordination." This statement reveals a fundamental flaw, in that it seeks to promote the interests of animals at the expense of human health.

The issue of protective legislation for bats in Texas raises the larger question of the legitimacy of similar environmental regulations. Obviously, it is necessary to prohibit actions by either individuals or corporations that would directly endanger people. However, there can be no moral basis for a law that reverses this principle by threatening the physical or economic welfare of those to whom it applies, even in the interest of protecting a natural entity.

In his essay "The Philosophy of Privation," Peter Schwartz writes, "Environmentalism takes as its premise that nature must be protected, not for man but from man. It is not human welfare that sets the standard by which environmentalists make their judgments." Because of this, Texans should not be so quick to embrace such environmentalist propaganda as an official flying mammal of the state. Regulations such as those protecting the Mexican Free-tailed bat constitute another step in the incremental encroachment on personal liberties. In the spirit of independence and self-determination that is this state's legacy, Texans must be willing to take a stand against environmental regulations that put people at risk.

Cindy McReynolds is a senior electrical engineering major.

Incorporate the Constitution on newly designed dollar bill

The eerie all-seeing eye, unfinished pyramid and American seal that are found on the reverse side of the \$1 bill are all too familiar to anyone who has ever used a vending machine, but their meanings are long outdated and forgotten.



JIM
FOREMAN

The unfinished pyramid, symbolizing that the United States will always be improving, the all-seeing eye, representing America's belief in divine guidance and the Great Seal of the United States are all accurate, time-honored depictions of the American spirit. However, with knowledge of their meaning as low as it is, the time has come for a new icon to carry the meaning of democracy.

For several years the idea of a new \$1 bill has been addressed in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The idea, conceived by middle school teacher Randy Wright, is to place an abbreviated version of the Constitution on the reverse side of the bill, according to csmonitor.com. Although there has been little opposition to the proposal, deemed the Liberty Bill, it has been pushed around Congress for the past three years.

The benefits of a paraphrased Constitution on the back of the most circulated piece of printed American currency are overwhelming.

"While 75 percent of Americans say that the Constitution is important, relevant and makes them proud, only 6 percent can name all the rights and freedoms found in the First Amendment. Sixty-two percent of Americans cannot name our three branches of government," Wright said.

The Liberty Bill has the potential to deepen the understanding of the Constitution for anyone who carries it.

Every year, the United States spends \$500 million on programs promoting the philosophies of democracy in other countries. The need for such programs would drastically decrease, thanks to the more than four billion \$1 bills that circulate internationally. The estimated cost of redesigning the \$1 bill was estimated to be about 1 percent of the budget previously mentioned.

The United States has grown so accustomed to the natural rights outlined in the Constitution, they are sometimes taken for granted. It is difficult to imagine living in a world where the people serve the government. Unfortunately, many people live in countries where democratic doctrine is prohibited, and those people are often led to believe the United States is a godless, greedy and corrupted nation because they

do not understand the philosophy that made it so wealthy.

Luckily, American ideals may not be welcome in tyrannical countries, but American money most certainly is, and the Liberty Bill could easily communicate the ideals that victims of oppression have been denied. Infiltrating anti-American territory for the purpose of teaching forbidden ideas is as simple as revamping an old image.

Of course there is still something to be said for the current \$1 bill design. The new design, which can be viewed at www.libertydollarbill.org, is not intended to completely scrap the old. In fact, the paraphrased Constitution is simply ghosted over the current symbols, making them faded but still recognizable.

Generally, the \$1 bill is redesigned every 10 years, and with a new design that has overwhelming benefits already available, it should not be a difficult decision for Congress to make, or so one would think. Perhaps in the meantime, Congress should consider revising its image as well, but this time with something more along the lines of an indecisive tortoise than the well-regarded eagle.

Jim Foreman is a junior mechanical engineering major.