

Commentorials from our readers

Isolationists are students concerned with saving skins

Dear Editor:

It is with heavy heart and increasing disgust that I have seen printed on this page, again and again, isolationist comments on America and the war, comments that reek of ignorance and cowardice. I have read that this war is or should be none of our concern, that conscription is wrong, and that the faculty tried to sell us down the river in its famed petition. I wish to register an emphatic protest against such nonsense. These letters have succeeded in marking Nebraska students as a gang of collegiates whose only concern is saving their precious skins to the damnation of our America.

Can it be that there are not enough clear heads among us to see that Great Britain today is fighting the battles wherein lies America's future? Can there be only a few who can see the consequences of a Hitler victory? Or is everyone being hoodwinked by a few who have forever cloaked themselves in shame? If Nazi Germany defeats England, Hitler's minions will dominate the entire eastern hemisphere. Only the British navy has kept the forces of oppression out of South America; once this barrier is removed, economic penetration of that continent will follow, leaving America either by attack or revolution, and even more surely heralds the end of our way of life, of our standards of living, and of our economic system, the consequences of which can only be imagined. If some reason that none of the above are worth saving in their present condition, I am happy to inform them that boats are still sailing for Europe.

The issue before us is plain: Either we do or we do not care what happens to America in the future. If we do not, then we have every right to become a somnolent isolationist. If we do, then we must realize how closely our future is bound to that of Britain. British leaders assert that American aid is essential to an English victory. If we want England to win, we must aid her, and the only way to keep our help off the ocean bottom is to see that it is not sunk. If the United States conveys ships to England, she is practically certain to become embroiled in the present European war. Must we convoy? Yes, and beyond doubt, for England has shown her inability to keep her sea-borne supplies above water. If America does not convoy her shipping to England, England will not survive. Helping England will lead to war, but war waged with a capable ally. Isolation will eventually find America facing the reich alone.

Hitler cannot win this war without conquering England; England cannot lose if backed by American aid, and effective aid can only reach Britain by convoy. America will fight Germany whether or not we convoy our ships to England. The totalitarian method of government will dominate the world of tomorrow if we do not aid Great Britain, or the democratic method of free men will continue to exist. We cannot escape this war by sitting snugly within our boundaries. We fight tomorrow if we convoy ships to England's shores, in the future if we do not. It is the accepted practice to choose the lesser of two evils. The lesser evil in this case is that of conveying victory to Great Britain.

Some of our students have vigorously protested the antics of a "naughty" Uncle Sam in wanting them to give up a year of their lives to learn which end of a rifle is the "business" end. These supposedly educated men are agreed that in case of emergency they would be glad to serve in our armed forces. In case of emergency, these same men would be worse than useless; a corpse is a liability in time of war, not an asset. Purely as a matter of self-preservation in time of war, these men should be interested in a comprehensive course of self-defense.

They have bawled to the high heavens about what a crime it is to take a man on the threshold of a great career (they hope) and put him in the army for a year. \$21 a month is an awful wage to pay a bright young man who might otherwise be the possessor of a well-paid job. I believe one year, for the United States, spent at \$21 a month is much better than working for nothing for the rest of one's life under national socialism. Where is the great sacrifice they are making? Hank Greenberg, for instance, has been torn loose from an extremely well-paid position and insists that he is glad to do his bit for our America. Where is their sacrifice? What is a year out of their insignificant lives when we remember Valley Forge, "Don't give up the ship," the Alamo, Gettysburg, San Juan hill, the Argonne forest and the "silent crosses row on row"? Are they too proud or too cowardly to give a year of their lives toward the preservation of something for which others before them have seen fit to make the supreme sacrifice? I would hang my head in shame if I did not have the courage to say that I revered the sacrifices that have built the America in which I live to such an extent that I feel I am not above lifting a hand to preserve it.

"Too little learning is a dangerous thing," and some of us have shown ourselves to be the counterpart of this statement. Independently and as private citizens, some of our faculty undertook to express their views on the war in the form of a petition. They, at least, showed that their learning brought home to them the enormous portent of a German victory, and some of us like yapping pups howled that we were wiser and that they were trying to railroad us into a war in which they would not fight. I for one give three hearty cheers to the faculty signers for their foresight and energetic part in trying to wake us to the future. I don't consider myself wiser than those who signed that petition, and

I can't see that they wish war any more than we do. Common sense dictates their stand, and not a sense of security from any consequence of this petition. Surely some of them are eligible to call in time of war, and no doubt some of them served in the last war. Be that as it may, why, if that petition was the powerful instrument for war that some of us thought it to be, did the American Legion not enter some sort of protest? The membership of the Legion is largely made up of men who served overseas and who know the hell that war is. They know what their sons are getting into. Why shouldn't the American Legion be in the front ranks of the isolationists? Can it be that they, too, see the threat to America that Nazi Germany offers?

Let's wake up and face facts. There is no longer any legitimate isolationism—it amounts to a positive pro-Germanism, since anything or anyone not for Britain and America is necessarily for Germany. In our hands, in the hands of this present generation of college men and women is the torch of liberty, the lifeblood of our country; it is our obligation to keep that torch burning, no matter what the sacrifice, and its flame is in danger as long as Nazi Germany represents the threat to our independence and liberty that it does at present.

Life is sweet to me, sweet because all of it lies before me. But I prefer liberty before I prefer peace; a life lived under the heel of oppression is worse than none at all. As Patrick Henry once said: "Give me liberty or give me death." If anyone doubts my sincerity, let him know that I shall be the first to give up my life to keep that torch burning.

Students, for the sake of America, do not be misled by those who say that if we turn our backs on a mad dog, we shall not be bitten. Do not suffer yourselves to be led astray by isolationists. Remember, eternal vigilance is the price of safety.

Charles H. Oldfather, Jr.

(Ed.—Any replies to this position are requested by the signer personally.)

Student asks Schroeder for alternate choice

Dear Editor:

I have read and re-read Mr. Schroeder's recent letter to the DAILY NEBRASKAN, and I must admit it is difficult to answer. Words written in the heat of emotion are always difficult to cope with because they would seem to demand answers just as hot and just as scathing. I rather think that the other two letters in the DAILY which appeared at the same time as Mr. Schroeder's offer sufficient condemnation of the tactics of name-calling which Mr. Schroeder employs.

"We are expected," he says, "when the signal is given, to start slaughtering the youth of other countries, or to let them kill us, or both. For this we are paid \$21 a month, room and board, and are required to give up our opportunities for careers and plans for living a normal existence becoming human beings. This is a tremendous price for the possibility of attaining the ends interventionists desire. Most of us who oppose entering the war do so on this ground."

First, I should like to ask Mr. Schroeder what are these "ends interventionists desire." I think that if he would talk to members of the faculty, he would find that their ends are same as his, i. e., "opportunities for careers and plans for living a normal existence becoming human beings," although I'm not quite certain what Mr. Schroeder means by "becoming human beings." I imagine that if he explored his mind more thoroughly, he would have to conclude that the German youth are not "human beings," since they "start slaughtering the youths of other countries."

I must repeat that what Mr. Schroeder seems to fail to see is that others may have the same ends in view as he does, but may differ as to the means to gain these ends. I think he fails to see that the real issue is whether we Americans can go on living our "normal existence" while the rest of the world is totalitarian, economically, socially, and politically. Those who advocate an active participation of the United States in the present conflict are interested just as strongly as Mr. Schroeder in maintaining the existence of what we consider to be the American way of life.

If Mr. Schroeder had not used the word "normal" in describing "existence," I think he would have been much smarter, because now I must ask him to define what he means by "normal," or is just being alive enough for him. And as soon as he has made that definition and has satisfied me that he can live what he considers a normal existence in a world such as he envisages, I will be satisfied.

Finally, let none of us, least of all Mr. Schroeder, think that those who advocate war like to see youths slaughtered. Let us not imply that those who advocate active participation, in the event that such participation is necessary, have no consciences whatsoever. I wonder if Mr. Schroeder has stopped to think how many members of the faculty have sons who are of the draft age. And I strongly suspect that those who do have sons of that age feel much more strongly about the lives of those sons than Mr. Schroeder does of his own. Those members of the faculty who signed the recent memorial hate what they signed as much as Mr. Schroeder hates it, but they see no alternatives. Will you, Mr. Schroeder, show us an alternative?

Charles H. Oldfather, Jr.

Is Daily guilty of coloring news?

Dear Editor:

You owe Senator Butler an apology which you should hasten to send him.

In your issue of May 23 your headline ran that "Senator Butler denounces petition"; in the story you stated that he "rapped the petition of 186 faculty members," that "Senator Butler said he was amazed at finding a group of university professors, etc."

Never have I seen a more flagrant coloring of news. Read the letter. There is not a hint in it of "denouncement," or of "rapping," or of "amazement." Senator Butler, with every courtesy, expressed his appreciation of the information "which has set forth quite clearly your feelings." Then he set forth his own position. He disagrees with our position, as we disagree with his; but the right to hold divergent opinions is implicitly recognized by his letter, as it is also recognized by the signers of the memorial. I respect Senator Butler all the more for the clear statement he gave of the reasons for his disagreement with us.

C. H. Oldfather.

Dear Editor:

Opinion on the Nebraska campus, for that matter public opinion throughout the country, is probably more curiously divided than at any previous time in our history. Yet this particular period in American history undoubtedly demands more unity of thought and of action than ever before.

I suppose one cause of the division can be traced almost directly to the third term issue and in the final analysis to all those things which the New Deal has stood for in the past eight years. I heard recently a clever definition of an isolationist. "An isolationist is a man who hates Roosevelt more than he hates Hitler." Though that definition, obviously intended to be more clever than acute, hardly describes the majority of cases, yet there are many people to whom it would apply.

Some are isolationists from ignorance, others are from having, so they say, weighed carefully the alternatives of intervention and isolation and then have made their decision. I, too, think I have weighed them, and I have come to the opposite conclusion. But let us be candid with one another. We are just guessing. Most of us have neither the knowledge nor the foresight to do more than guess. I do not intend to attempt to reply to all of the arguments of the isolationists, but I cannot restrain myself from questioning what seems to be one of their basic departures from logic.

Almost every isolationist with whom I have talked or of whom I have read agrees that we should build up our own defenses to protect this hemisphere. Let us examine this point. Obviously if we build defenses for protection, we are protecting ourselves from something or some one. What is this something, or who is this some one? I think the isolationists have Germany in mind. What does this mean? In a military sense, it means that we give to our future opponents the advantage of time and place of attack. We merely sit and wait. That is a big order.

From a strategic sense, it implies that we must fight by ourselves, without the aid of Great Britain, next to us, the greatest naval power on earth. To this the isolationists will rely that we will make ourselves so strong that no one will dare attack us. By what time, might I ask? By 1946. This departure from logic is interesting to me. What is logical, might I ask, about a program which advocates building up defenses against a potential enemy while watching with equanimity our most potent ally against this enemy go down. It is very interesting.

Let us speak of one final matter, which seems to me to be more pertinent than any other. While we have been arguing this question back and forth, the American people have made a decision, a majority decision that this country is committed to a defense of democracy in the world. Just as seriously have we committed ourselves to a defeat of Hitler's aims in this world. Let us recognize this fact. We are the "arsenal of democracy." We have promised Yugoslavia and Greece that they were fighting on the side which would eventually triumph.

These are things we have done. But many still talk as though we had not done them. Many talk as though the choice were still before us. Let us face the facts. Even the Saturday Evening Post, whose editors have been among the most bitter isolationists in the country, has thrown in the towel. These editors have said in their most recent issue that their belief in democracy has made them realize that it is their duty and it has never been considered not to be their duty to stand by the decisions of the majority.

For the minority, as well as the majority, has an equal stake in the world conflict which the United States has entered. Both sides rise or fall together. Neither side will be better off than the other after this war is over. Now is the time, if ever it is, for the American people to show that their belief in democracy transcends some of their innermost convictions. Democracy should be our innermost conviction. Let us continue to criticize means, but let us not forget that we have taken steps from which neither isolationists nor interventionists would ever advocate withdrawing. It is high time America shows itself united. The decision rests with each of us.

Charles H. Oldfather, Jr.