

Editorial

Senators neglect duty by ignoring Douglas' actions

The Legislature's Special Commonwealth Committee neglected its duty this weekend when it declined to take any action on Attorney General Paul Douglas' role in the failed industrial savings and loan institution.

According to *The Lincoln Star*, the committee met in a 5-hour session Sunday night at the Lincoln Hilton. It rejected a resolution that would have impeached Douglas and one that would have censured him and asked for his resignation. The committee adjourned without even hearing a third resolution that would have condemned Douglas but would not have called for his resignation.

The facts in the Commonwealth case probably still are too sketchy to call for Douglas' impeachment. It might even be inappropriate to ask for his resignation at this time. But it seems clear that some of his actions, although perfectly legal, were not made in the best interest of the state. For that, the attorney general at least should be officially reprimanded by those who are investigating the matter.

According to a report issued last month, Douglas and Lincoln attorney Paul Galter purchased 78 lots from Commonwealth Vice President Marvin Copple and sold them for a profit of \$118,288. Sixty of the lots were sold to Copple's personal secretary who received loans from Commonwealth to make the purchase. That, and other business dealings with the Copple family, clearly are serious errors of judgment. It also makes Douglas' effectiveness as the state prosecutor questionable.

Fortunately, some senators saw the need for official action on the matter. Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha, who resigned from the special committee, introduced a resolution to the full Legislature Monday calling for the impeachment of Douglas. Such a resolution would require 25 votes to pass. If it were to pass, the attorney general would be prevented from carrying out his job until the Nebraska Supreme Court tried and judged him. If convicted, he would be removed from office.

Eight other senators, all of whom were members of the Commonwealth committee, introduced a bill Monday that would condemn Douglas for his actions. That bill does not call for his resignation. Those senators are to be commended for keeping the issue alive, but that does not excuse their inaction in committee.

Some have suggested that the committee concern itself only with the dilemma of Commonwealth depositors who lost their savings. That should be a high priority, of course, but the committee also must work to see that such a disaster does not happen again. Making state officials accountable for their actions would be a step in that direction.

Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the spring 1984 Daily Nebraskan. They are written by this semester's editor in chief, Larry Sparks.

Other staff members will write editorials throughout the semester. They will carry the author's name after the final sentence.

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Stamping out death isn't worth it

I was just pulling the peanut butter puffs out of the oven the other evening when the door bell rang. It was a cheery gentleman in a plaid suit who announced he was collecting for The National Committee to Stamp Out Death.

I said that sounded like an intriguing idea and would he care for a peanut butter puff?

"Thank you," he said, accepting one. "In return, may I remind you that death has been a scourge of



Arthur Hoppe

mankind ever since the dawn of recorded history? Today, in America alone, death claims more lives each year than toxic wastes, sky diving and underwater arc welding combined."

"Incredible," I said. "Why hasn't something been done about this before?"

He shrugged. "People are apathetic," he said. "Death has been around so long that they think it's inevitable. 'Sooner or later,' they say to themselves, 'I'm going to have to bite The Big Bullet, and that's that.'"

"But it's not true?"

"Of course not. With enough research funds we can lick anything. All we need is one big breakthrough and you, too, can enjoy eternal life. How much shall I put you down for?"

When I scratched my nose thoughtfully, he quickly continued. "Just think, you can look forward to an eternity of sunrises and sunsets, the endless chang-

ing of the tides, an infinity of summers, falls, winters and springs, a limitless..."

"How long?" I asked.

"Forever," he said firmly. "Something wrong with that?"

"I was thinking of my back exercises," I explained. "Every morning I have to do these back exercises, and if I thought I had to do them forever..."

"Instead, think of your loved ones," he suggested.

"Them, too," I said. "I know I promised to love, honor and cherish my dear wife, Glynda. But the contract has a time limit. I'm not sure she could put up with my forgetting to turn the closet light off for the next million years."

"Look," he said, "imagine having a boundless expanse of time in which to accomplish all you'd ever dreamed."

"I suppose I'd finally have to paint the gazebo," I agreed reluctantly. "And read Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, which I have been putting off because I didn't want to read it. You know, it's amazing the things you can't find time to do that you don't want to do. Then there's Aunt Gretchen, who gives me a subscription to *Outdoor Fishing* for my birthday every year."

"You don't like *Outdoor Fishing*?"

"I don't fish. And when I think of writing a million more thank-you notes to Aunt Gretchen...well, frankly, I think I work better under a deadline."

In the end, I told him I gave at the office. But that wasn't true. The fact is that while I am certainly in no hurry to get there, I agree with those who feel that death is what makes life worth living.

Besides, I can't think of any other way of permanently deferring taxes.

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Allow prayer (oops! meditation) in schools

The bandwagon for a constitutional amendment allowing time for school prayer (oops! my mistake, I mean private meditation) is steadily gaining momentum. Although the current attempt in Congress probably won't receive approval from the House of Representatives this time, it is likely that before too



Mike Frost

long, prayer (eek! it happened again, I mean meditation) will become a regular part of the academic day, wedged between recess and sex education (egad! I mean reproductive science).

Much of the impetus for the current drive to bring back prayer (gadzooks! What's the matter with me, meditation) is a basic misconception about what the current law means.

Many claim the 1962 Supreme Court decision makes prayer (oops! I mean medi-no, I guess I mean

prayer this time) illegal. Nothing could be further from the truth; only organized prayer, conducted en masse during class time, is prohibited. Individual meditation (woops! I mean prayer) is perfectly permissible.

Contrary to popular belief, then, this scene has never and will never occur:

The setting: A typical fifth grade classroom, nestled away in suburban Midville, U.S.A.

Teacher: All right class, it's time to take a pop quiz over today's mathematics assignment.

Johnny (whispering): Jeez, I didn't do today's assignment.

Billy: Boy Johnny, you haven't got a prayer (I mean — oh never mind).

Johnny: What am I going to do? Please Lord, just let me pass this test.

The door bursts open.

Cop: Hold it right there, theist scum. You were praying! You better come with me.

Billy: You can't arrest him just for praying.

Cop: Shut up, punk. Why aren't you reading your version of *The Communist Manifesto*.

Teacher: We're studying multiplication first.

Cop: The opiate of the maths, eh? I'll deal with you later. Come on kid, there's a guillotine with your name on it waiting for you.

Individual prayer (aarrgh, I mean... let's just say prayer) is allowed and is used in public schools, regardless of the Supreme Court ruling. The original decision came about because of potential abuses within the context of organized prayer time. Some of the so-called prayers dramatically infringed on the rights of various minorities (gee, I guess I mean individuals).

The decision was meant to set the matter straight once and for all: In order to preserve everyone's rights, organized prayer time would be prohibited. The individual could still seize the initiative and pray to his or her God — in the personal, heartfelt and spontaneous manner in which prayer was meant to be conducted.

Maybe that was too confusing. Maybe, in the spirit of simplifying the matter, we should go ahead and allow prayer (woopsy-doopsy, I mean meditation — or is that prayer — no I think this time it's meditation, but — well, let's just say introspection) back in the schools.