

Editorial

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Motto unfulfilled UNL blamed in NSSA battle

"We're all in this together" is the motto of the Nebraska State Student Association. NSSA is comprised of chapters from UNL, UNO, Peru State, Wayne State and Chadron State colleges. A number of non-UNL representatives to the recent NSSA meeting felt that the endearing motto was unfulfilled. They placed the blame for this at the feet of UNL's delegation. (See, for example, Wayne State student Mike Solty's letter, published today.)

Since its inception the presupposition of NSSA has been that the entire state post-secondary school system shares a sufficient number of interests to justify unified lobbying. That has always been a doubtful proposition.

The simple fact is that UNL is different.

A state like Nebraska cannot afford to have a research emphasis at every institution; nor does every Nebraska student want to attend an institution like UNL. That's fine. But the fact of the matter is that the nature of the school requires different treatment from the rest of the system. That UNL's delegation to the NSSA general assembly insisted on this distinction is a cause for praise — not condemnation.

Non-UNL members complain that the UNL delegation abused its majority power and failed to take into consideration the whole.

That complaint, however, makes no sense.

Nobody required that NSSA set up a delegate scheme that is based upon school population. The fact that UNL is so large so as to constitute a majority of delegates is not the fault of the delegates from UNL. If NSSA wants a representation scheme not based on population, let them change their constitution.

But if NSSA doesn't change its constitution, why should non-UNL members complain about being outvoted? Presumably NSSA has delegates voted or appointed from every campus so their respective views can be heard. One legitimate model of political representation is that representatives should, well, represent their constituency. The representatives from UNL shouldn't be under any more of a burden simply because this school has a large number of votes. In democracies, those that gets the votes gets the wins.

On a more realistic level, this recent conflict serves to underscore the relative uselessness of UNL participation in NSSA. Perhaps it would be better for the four other schools that share substantive interests to re-form the organization without UNL: UNL can easily represent its own interests through GLC and ASUN, and the bad feelings between the campuses can be avoided.

Reagan's blunder

EEC takes on 'wavering juror' role

A famous "WGRP in Cincinnati" episode featured Herb Tarlek as a jury foreman who was trying to convince a wavering juror the defendant was guilty. But just when the juror changed his mind, so did Herb — despite the juror's protest, "It was your argument that convinced me."

That seems to apply to the European Economic Community's decision last week to impose limited sanctions against Syria for its support of international terrorism. In this case, the United States has been in the role of Herb Tarlek, thanks to the Reagan administration's ill-considered decision to send arms to Iran. Despite this blunder, we hope the "wavering juror" — the EEC — won't change its mind.

In truth, the British probably had as much to do with the EEC decision as the Americans. It was a British court that found Syria was involved in the plot to blow up an Israeli jetliner last April. Britain broke diplomatic ties with Syria after the verdict and urged its allies to take some sort of action as well.

With the exception of Greece, which says it's already doing the same things, the EEC nations agreed to ban arms sales to Syria, suspend high-level official visits there and increase surveillance of Syrian missions and

airlines. Since Syria gets most of its arms from the Soviet Union, these actions won't do much. But it's better than doing nothing.

The United States has been arguing for some time that Syria, Libya and Iran are all involved in supporting terrorists. When the British severed diplomatic ties with Syria, the Reagan administration recalled the U.S. ambassador to Damascus — an action just short of a break in ties. Of course, the air raid on Libya last spring remains the supreme example of American feelings about Moammar Gadhafi's role in terrorist attacks.

But after President Reagan's admission that the United States broke its own embargo by sending arms to Iran, it's hard to believe the European nations think we're sincere. Even if one accepts Reagan's argument that the arms were meant as a symbol of good faith to Iran — not as ransom for American hostages in Lebanon — it should be obvious such an action undermines anti-terrorist efforts.

Many Americans still believe tough action against nations supporting terrorism is the right thing to do. If previous U.S. actions have helped to convince the EEC, then we hope the Reagan administration's mistake won't dissuade them from doing what is right.

Persons or 'unpersons'

News of new life gives birth to thoughts on legalized abortion

I don't know why it is, but news of new life in my family or among friends often comes to me simultaneously with reminders that millions of souls will never be the subject of a birth announcement.

As it happens, my youngest sister, Courtney, was born on Jan. 22, 1973 — the very day the U.S. Supreme Court announced its Roe vs. Wade decision legalizing abortion. If I want to think about the implications of that ruling, I only have to look at my sister — 13 years old, an exuberant teen-ager and a budding volleyball star.

The most recent example was Thursday. I called the managing editor at the Star-Herald in Scottsbluff, where I worked in the summer of 1985, to check the job market. He didn't have an opening, but he did tell me he and his wife had a baby daughter recently. The demands of fatherhood and newspaperdom were weighing a bit heavily on him, but he was relishing the joys of having brought a new life into the world.

Contrast that with the Omaha World-Herald story the same day on a meeting of the Omaha chapter of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights. The speaker was the Rev. Pamela Barnett, director of field services and state organization for this collection of 31 religious groups representing 13 denominations.

Barnett focused on the bombing of abortion clinics and harassment of pro-abortionists, saying the actions show those who oppose abortion are becoming ever more desperate. If she and other pro-abortion clergy speak out, she said, "We hope we will be effective in countering the claims of the 'religious right.'"

That's a challenge to respond that can't be passed up.

First, the standard disclaimer. Neither I nor any other pro-lifers I know would ever consider blowing up an abortion clinic to make our point. Sadly, every "cause" has its paranoid extremists. I'm certain, for example, that feminists who want all-male Rotary Clubs to admit them as full members wouldn't condone blowing up a restaurant hosting a Rotarian luncheon just to make their point.

On the other hand, the Rev. Barnett has a point. I do feel some despair as a pro-lifer. I despair because it doesn't seem to be possible to melt the har-

dened hearts of so-called 'pro-choicers' with humanitarian appeals. When I witness the spectacle of supposedly Christian groups banding together and saying it's moral to choose to kill an unborn child, I'm especially saddened.

Such Christians have forgotten more than the elegantly simple Fifth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." They also ignore the psalmist's testimony in



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Psalm 139:13 (Good News Bible) that God "created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb."

Not only does God create life, but he watches over life even before birth. He told the prophet Jeremiah, "I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:4).

No, God didn't put a specific passage in his inspired Word saying, "Thou shalt not abort an unborn child." But it shouldn't be that hard for Christians to draw that conclusion from the Bible. If it's a dreadful sin to kill someone after he or she leaves the womb, it's just as terribly wrong to do so while the child remains in the womb. Christians simply cannot justify abortion when God's word is so abundantly clear.

However, I know many of you are not Christian and therefore don't regard the above as relevant. To you, I'd suggest it's just as possible to condemn abortion using secular reasoning. Christians don't have a monopoly on considering life sacred; I know people who don't follow Jesus but wouldn't dream of taking the lives of other persons, even in wartime.

But the greatest crimes against humanity are often justified by declaring groups of people — to use Orwell's term — "unpersons." Jews across the world were declared "unpersons" by Adolf Hitler; six million bodies testify to what followed. The U.S. Supreme Court's infamous Dred Scott decision of 1857 declared black slaves "unpersons" by ruling slaves had no rights.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans died in the struggle to perpetuate or end that indefensible practice.

The Roe vs. Wade decision stands squarely in that ignoble tradition: It declares unborn children "unpersons" who have no inherent right to live. Just think about that. People born in this country after Jan. 22, 1973, are here today only because someone decided it wasn't an inconvenience to allow them to live. If such a ruling had been in place when you and I were born, you might not be able to read this plea that innocent unborns not be punished for being conceived.

The question has been raised whether it serves any purpose to bear children who will surely die of starvation, as is the case in some African countries. That begs another question: What gives any of us the right to decide who lives and who dies? If you value your own life and were one of those children, could you actually say to your parents, "I wish you had aborted me?"

It's not a question, as many feminists would put it, of denying women the right to control their own bodies. Women know when they make love that a life might be conceived as a result. They make their "choice" at that point; if a life indeed is conceived, no one has the right to change their mind and take that life away.

I fully acknowledge the picture gets fuzzy in the case of the three classic "exceptions": rape, incest and saving the mother's life. Even as a strong pro-lifer, I can't say fully what I would do then. But I know many who feel as I do, however torn they may be on those counts, would settle for a law allowing abortions only in those cases. The status quo, however, clearly cannot be condoned.

There must be a reason why even men and women otherwise in sympathy with feminist views are working to end the Abortion Era. It's because they know the drive for women's equality does not justify the termination of almost 20 million innocent lives. We're not trying to impose some fundamentalist dictatorship; we just want to put an end to the killing. That, my friends, is the only "moral" choice.

(Von Kampen is a senior news-editorial and music major and is DN editorial page assistant.)

ERA battle to puzzle descendants; time to concentrate on other gains

When I first heard that the Equal Rights Amendment was going on the ballot in Vermont, I felt a small instinctive groan rumbling up from the pit of my stomach. Not again. Not now.

The conditions were pretty good in Vermont, I was told by the equal-rights forecasters. The candidates at the top of the ticket were all in favor of the ERA. There was a core of activists. A state amendment wouldn't encounter the anxiety about drafting women unless Vermont suddenly decided to go to war with New Hampshire.

But when the ballots were finally tallied up, the amendment went down. The referendum lost by 5,000 votes out of 200,000, the smallest margin in recent state races. But it lost.

The amendment also lost because men voted against it. The popular mythology still holds that the ERA is a war between women. The CBS exit polls showed that 61 percent of the women voted for it and only 39 percent of the men.

Nevertheless, in the final count, proponents of ERA weren't able to convince a majority of Vermont voters that their lives would be improved by an Equal Rights Amendment to their constitution.

What happens now? Days before the election, Eleanor Smeal, president of the National Organization for Women, sent out a letter telling members, among other things, that NOW has

begun planning for the introduction of a federal ERA in the next Congress. She wrote, "I believe that the time is ripe for a new Equal Rights Amendment."

The time is ripe? I could feel that groan rumbling up again. Will we end up dragging this ideal from one losing contest to another? Is the ERA to become the Harold Stassen of amendments? How much energy should be



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invested today in the ERA and at what cost to smaller, winnable changes for women's lives.

Smeal, whose leadership is empowered by a very clear sense of movement politics and of history, compares the fight for ERA to the fight for suffrage: "We will lose until we win." It took more than a century to get the vote. At the time of Susan B. Anthony's death, women had only won the right in 11 states. There is no "movement," unless people keep pushing the edges.

She disputes the idea that the fight for ERA has come at the cost of other changes. The amendment is, rather, she says, the number-one fund-raiser, the single cause that rallies and recruits activists across the age spectrum. It

draws women in. "We don't just talk about ERA in an esoteric way as if it were a symbol," says Smeal. "As we fight for it, women learn about pension discrimination and comparable worth and discrimination in divorce laws."

There are choices to be made. In polls, Americans support the ERA; in legislatures and polling booths, too few have signed on the dotted line. With a Democratic Congress on the way in, it is possible to introduce a new ERA, possible to mount a strenuous campaign. But is it really possible to slog successfully through the Congress, through the state legislature?

The 100th Congress will grapple with an important women's agenda: the Civil Rights Restoration Act to resurrect Title 9, the parental leave bill, and a wide-ranging program for children. These are winnable. In America communities, the front line of need today is for family supports, especially child care. These demand energy.

Next year, 1987, will mark the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. Two hundred years, and women are still excluded. It is a vintage year to talk about women's rights and lack of rights, about ERA. But it is a year to mount another full-fledged battle for its passage? Not by my reckoning.

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