

Nebraskan Editorials:

The Charge: 'Frank, But Unfair'

The Nebraskan has been criticized for its news appraisal and editorial expression.

In a letter to the editor Dr. William Pfeiler, chairman of the Germanic Languages Department, said that The Nebraskan has been "frank... but not fair" in its presentation of news and editorial commentary on the controversy arising from the demotion of Clyde Mitchell as chairman of the department of agricultural economics.

Editorially, Pfeiler says that "hearsay, rumor, vague generalizations and subjective impressions are the basis for your charges."

Newswise, he contends, the paper is too often "... oblivious to the truth that there are usually two, if not more, sides to the question."

These are important considerations for any newspaper, particularly a student publication, and they constitute essentially the criticism which has been directed at The Nebraskan in the past few weeks.

For these reasons, it is imperative that these charges be answered as completely as space allows.

First, a little background. A chance remark in a Student Council meeting sometime ago first alerted The Nebraskan to the demotion of Dr. Mitchell. Checking on its authenticity, the Nebraskan contacted all but one member of the agricultural economics department who attended the special meeting with Dean Lambert prior to spring vacation.

No one who attended this meeting denied that they had been told: (1) Mitchell was to be relieved as chairman; (2) a replacement was being sought, and (3) pressure from sources outside the University prompted the decision.

In the meantime The Nebraskan talked with Dean Lambert six times; Dean of Faculties Adam Breckenridge three times (once in a 25 minute personal conversation) and Chancellor Hardin twice. No one affirmed the reports of the twenty-odd professors.

The Nebraskan printed the story in a Friday issue, attributing its information to "sources in the agriculture economics department" with adjacent quotes from the administrative officials to the effect that "no change was being considered."

Three days later the official announcement appeared that Mitchell was being replaced as chairman of the department. The reason given at this time for the demotion was to "... strengthen beyond present levels the research and extension program of the department."

This statement appeared to be an oblique reflection upon Mitchell's reputation and professional competence. In an attempt to learn more about his abilities in agricultural economics, The Nebraskan wrote several important economists, all authorities in the field, who might be in a position to comment upon Mitchell. All newspaper clippings were enclosed in the letters.

Many excellent replies were received, including commendations for Mitchell from such outstanding figures as Lauren Seth, editorial page editor of the Des Moines Register; Leon Keyserling, former chairman of President Truman's Council of Economic Advisers; and John Galbraith, professor of economics at Harvard University.

About this time Dr. William Swindler's resignation as director of the school of journalism appeared. The implications in his statement, to the effect that the conditions producing the demotion of Dr. Mitchell might not be isolated, prompted The Nebraskan to interview personally nearly 50 professors, who represented a cross-section of 15 different departments at the

University. After two weeks of interviewing, the results were published in two news stories. Every remark, every quote, every phrase which was used in these stories was given to Nebraskan reporters by University faculty members. All quoted remarks have been saved in the reporter's notes or notes specially prepared by the interviewer.

Names were not used in the articles at the request of the faculty members interviewed and, according to the ethics of journalism, cannot be revealed until the persons involved give the newspaper permission to do so.

Also, at this time, approximately 40 professors who had recently left the institution were contacted by letter. Each was asked three questions: Would you care to comment on Clyde Mitchell the current controversy on the University campus or the reasons why you left Nebraska?

Every letter which has been received from these professors has been published (including several which disagreed explicitly with the editorial stand of The Nebraskan). These letters have all been signed; they represent the author's viewpoint and they have been published as such.

The Nebraskan cannot "back up factually" every assertion which has been made in its news stories. This is neither within the areas of journalism responsibility nor common sense possibility.

However, it can completely back up the fact that every story—and every assertion which has been made in the stories—was either given directly to The Nebraskan by University faculty members or sent to us by faculty members who have recently left the institution.

These are the only facts which are needed to publish a legitimate news story.

The play which each story has received has been gauged as objectively as possible in accord with its importance, its relevance and its corresponding significance with the remainder of the news for that particular day.

However, the point is still good that "the other side" has not been given adequate treatment. But this is not entirely the fault of The Nebraskan nor is it because such an opportunity has been lacking.

Before and after each story has been published, The Nebraskan has contacted all the persons involved, asking for comments or statements. This has been done in almost every case, except where time did not permit or the person concerned was unavailable for comment.

When statements have been made, the paper has tried to give them as good coverage as their importance merited. The news columns—as well as the letterp columns have and will continue to be open to all comment, pro or con, on the issue.

In regard to editorial expression, The Nebraskan has based its stand upon the remarks made in the agricultural economics staff meeting, the series of conflicting statements made by the administrators and the many statements which have been given to us, both privately and publicly, by University personnel.

The Nebraskan may have made mistakes, it may have used bad judgment, but nevertheless it has striven conscientiously to provide the public with information—pro and con—on an issue which may determine the future and integrity of the University of Nebraska.

It is with this in mind that The Nebraskan welcomes the dissenting opinion of Dr. Pfeiler.—B. E.

In your campaign for academic freedom on the campus, you have given copious space to your supporters. I trust that in the "enterprise of ideas" you will be equally generous with views differing from yours.

C. P. Scott, famous editor of the liberal "Manchester Guardian" from 1872 to 1929 once said. "A newspaper is of necessity something of a monopoly, and its first duty is to shun the temptations of monopoly. Its primary office is the gathering of news."

"At the peril of its soul it must see that the supply is not tainted. Neither in what it gives nor in what it does not give nor in the mode of presentation must the unclouded face of truth suffer wrong. Comment is free, but facts are sacred. 'Propaganda' so-called by this means is hateful. The voice of opponents no less than that of friends has a right to be heard. Comment also is justly subject to a self-imposed restraint. It is well to be frank; it is even better to be fair."

The Nebraskan has, indeed, a monopoly as far as campus opinion is concerned; in issue after issue for weeks and months you have set forth your views, unhampered by censorship or restraint.

In your charges you have been frank, in the arraignment of sup porting views you have shown skill, but you have not been fair insofar as you failed to consider the complexity of the administration's problem and insofar as you gave editorial emphasis to statements solicited according to your apparently handpicked list.

You have succeeded in squeezing the last modicum of sensational alarmism out of your campaign. Your sampling of opinion was well directed, but again you failed in giving any evidence of a sober, critical appraisal of the stories you gathered from various sources.

You cannot be oblivious to the truth that there are usually two, if not more, sides to every question. But with unbelievable thoughtlessness, you accepted each critic's view and opinion as a sterling fact, never suggesting that men have an inborn tendency to rationalize their actions and expect in terms of maximum self-justification.

Hearsay, rumor, vague generalizations and subjective impressions are the basis for your charges which you voice with such intriguing eloquence and ringing pathos.

When Chancellor Hardin, after serious and thoughtful deliberation with the senate committees, pointed out the right approach to the rectification of possible undesirable conditions, you tried to prejudice your readers against him from the start by headlining:



Courtesy Lincoln Star Pfeiler

—Professor Calls Nebraskan— 'Frank, But Not Fair'

"Hardin says Expressions of Opinion 'Welcome'." The quotation marks here are the tools of a vicious type of journalism that should have no place in a newspaper that claims to fight for high ideals.

In your editorial of May 15, you state that all statements, etc., made this semester The Nebraskan can "back up factually." Please do so; do not just say so! Repeat: do so!!!

Two committees are ready to receive the proofs of your accusations, especially the one on "Tenure and Academic Privilege," whose chairman, Professor Julius Cohen, 302 Law Building, is a colleague of top professional competence and unquestioned integrity. If you should fail to "back up factually," you will be suspected of reckless and irresponsible calumny.

Since I have started to express to you my views, mainly because no one single faculty voice had been raised in opposition to your spirited campaign so far, permit me a few more observations:

For the first time I have seen the term "demotion" used in connection with the replacement of a chairman. It was cleverly chosen because of its deprecatory overtones.

A chairman is never "promoted" to his position, but appointed; he is never demoted, but relieved. If the policies of the administration clash with the views of the chairman, he may withdraw from his position and devote again his full time, in full academic freedom, to his professional duties.

Many outstanding faculty people have served as chairmen and after a while returned to research and teaching. The duty of a chairman commands no higher respect than those pertaining to teaching and research.

A prerequisite for his success as a departmental administrator is that he can co-operate loyally with the University administration.

With academic freedom goes responsibility, fairness and restraint. History shows that ambitious advocates of freedom too often came to identify their own personal interests with the cause of humanity at large, and it is also a sad fact that not infrequently pioneers of liberty have turned into arrogant and intolerant suppressors of views contrary to their own.

Another matter has been given small attention. Our democratic belief that the will of the people

must prevail is also basic to our system of University administration. The Regents, elected by the people, appoint the executive officer, the Chancellor; they are the legitimate functionaries of the people.

Not for a moment do I maintain that they and the Deans and the faculty represent wisdom incarnate; I am sure that errors in judgment cannot be avoided, but the fact is: they are the people with the legitimate authority to run the University.

We may disagree with them on some of their decisions (those who know of my record will remember that I, on occasion, openly and in

Eds. Note: This letterp was sent to The Nebraskan by Prof. W. K. Pfeiler, chairman of the department of Germanic languages. It is printed in its entirety.

committees, vigorously questioned some measures of the administration, but no public institution can function if it lacks the support of its staff.

I am surprised that in all the discussions of the ethical issue of freedom, etc., the important factor of loyalty has never been mentioned. Loyalty is not obsequious conformism; it means a faithful support of general policies, even if some of their aspects may cause us to wonder.

The success of a democratic community rest, as I see it, on two pillars: the restraint of the majority in the use of its authority and the willingness of the minority to co-operate with the majority for the good of the whole, as long as no basic principles are violated.

I want to go on record—that according to my knowledge—the morale of the faculty is far from low, that research and teaching are under no restraint and are carried on vigorously, despite the fact that professors come and professors go and chairmen are ap-

pointed and "dis-appointed." This process goes on in any institution of higher learning; it is normal at the University of Nebraska.

As a member of many committees of the University in the past, and among them was also the committee on nomination for membership in the Graduate College, I found the approach to personal problems and questions of policy eminently factual and fair.

On more than one occasion, any suggestion of an undue personal influence found vigorous and unanimous rejection on the part of a faculty that in no way resembles a bunch of cowed weaklings as you portray them in your discussions.

And most of them do not wait to speak up to the administration until they live at a "safe distance" and have gone elsewhere because "freedom was threatened" here.

Chairmen and members of the faculty cannot always secure administrative support and approval for plans and policies that some of us deem quite essential.

Sensitive people might be likely to see in this a personal persecution, or feel that someone is "after them"; they feel offended, hurt and sulk when they cannot have their way.

The University has over seventy departments, so one should realize that not having all of ones own suggestions followed is not a matter of personal suppression, but a procedure dictated by necessity and an over-all well-balanced administration.

The majority of the faculty is alert and not aware of the dangers that selfish groups constitute; it welcomes vigorous support from the students in the cause of academic freedom, but views it with sadness when this grand cause is used to vent an irresponsible animus, perhaps for the sake of an exaggerated self-assertion.

W. K. Pfeiler
Chairman
Department of Germanic Languages



Roger Hahl Building Program Produces 'Unfunctional Mediocrity'

Before I satisfy your great hunger for more of my wisdom, wit and inimitable prose, I should like to quote a rather good comment which appeared in TIME this week—I never read anything deeper than TIME—by H. L. Mencken, on a professor's environment: "His whole professional activity is circumscribed by the prejudices, vanities and avarices of his university trustees, i.e., a committee of soap-boilers, nail-manufacturers, bank-directors and politicians."

Now, I don't mean to say that that has any relevance here, of course. There's no soap-boiling done in this state.

However, whatever we say about the University, the Ad-mirny-hallers can always switch the subject by referring to "the building program" that they are carrying on here at the Citadel.

They may be torturing professors on the rack, or cutting the tongues out of students, but we can always "point with pride" to the new campus buildings.

And we must say that the administration has used great foresight, ingenuity and imag-

ination in forwarding our campus building. They are using all of the modernistic trends, like no design, and no architect.

I have heard competent architects foam at the mouth for hours about the ugly new buildings that the University is erecting. The glory spot was the mausoleum called the State Historical Society that was set up to house relics and give the campus the vigorous flavor of Forest Lawn.

Next, we have the Student Union, which, I hear, is going to be expanded. It is a depressing spot as it is; expanded it will become macabre. This inefficient, colorless,

My Bootless Cries unfunctional blob is rather pathetic when compared with the marvelous unions at Colorado and Oklahoma.

The landscaping can turn any heart lyrical, especially the lovely temporaries enhancing the mall. We're all desperately waiting for the sickly trees to grow up enough to hide the rest of the buildings. Burnet Hall and Andrews

Hall and Morrill Hall are all specimens of what is known around here as Selleck Quad Modern — or Upside-down Cracker Box.

It wouldn't be so bad if they weren't building more and more of these shapeless, dull, unimaginative monstrosities. More of that lovely, lovely Selleck Quad Classical-Army-Barrack is on the planning board.

Love Library, which is attractive on the outside, is completely impractical and unfunctional as a library within. It is built like a public building, with great, empty, dark halls.

The only place you can study is at long, public tables in large, noisy public halls, where you are continually disturbed by the undertone of fifty people comparing notes.

In short, somebody had better tell Ad-mirny Hall that the "building program" has produced nothing but unfunctional mediocrity and promises little better unless the Great Creators who are designing and planning it use more imagination or hire someone with talent.

Advertisement for Chevrolet cars featuring 'One-Fifty' and 'Two-Ten' models. Includes images of the cars and text: 'HOT PERFORMERS with heart-warming prices!', 'The "One-Fifty" and "Two-Ten" Series bring you Chevrolet's sassy styling and record-breaking road action at prices you'll warm up to fast!', 'You won't find us playing favorites. You get the same lively power in "Two-Ten" and "One-Fifty" models that you do in Bel Air. Up to 225 h.p.! The same performance, too—the wide-awake kind that rates Chevy the peppiest, easiest handling car on the road!', 'And look at the model choice you've got. Twenty in all, including four hardtops—two of them "Two-Tens." Six station wagons—three "Two-Tens" and one "One-Fifty." So even among the lower priced Chevrolets you have plenty of choice. Come in and look them over!'

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