

Editorials

Commentary

Behind the

corn curtain

The thought of a student on the Board of Regents is enough to sour the precious body fluids of many, more-conservative Nebraskans.

(And especially so for that majority of over-21ers who negated young peoples' right to participate in public decisions by defeating the 19-vote.)

But the suggestions for student representatives on the governing bodies of other schools will eventually penetrate the corn curtain which enfolds this state.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, already, students have been allowed and even encouraged to partake in some areas of University government — Publications Board, the housing committee and advisory boards, for instance. Perhaps soon, when the concept has been tried at coastal campuses, the University of Nebraska will also make the progressive move to expand student representation to the Board.

Since students are valuable on the various committees that conduct the day-to-day operation of the campus, then they would be all the more valuable in formulating policy and philosophy of education at the University of Nebraska. If nothing else, a student Regent could present an important point of view to the other Regents. And he could represent 18,000 people who have the greatest stake in education at this school.

OTHER SCHOOLS may institute such student representation programs as last-minute maneuvers to fend off campus riots; they may do it to compromise violent confrontations with students. But the University of Nebraska in this particular moment of its evolution, could use a student Regent to work out a system of education which would make such undesirable future situations impossible.

Youth should be given a voice. In state government, to be sure. But a voice in the University is of more importance — not only to the students, but to the future success of the school.

Perhaps a student Regent would sour some; but that is better than allowing education at the University to also sour, by reason of stagnation and failure to communicate.

Ed Icenogle

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Mob psychosis for study, degrees

By Martin L. Gross

To the supra-mother's classic admonition to "eat eat" must now be added what is rapidly becoming a contemporary Americanism: "study study," and for as long as humanly possible.

We Americans are obviously not becoming infatuated with intellect, but we are developing a mass neurosis about the quantity of our children's — and everyone else's — educational achievement.

After touring America in 1850, Alexis de Tocqueville brilliantly summed up our educational psyche: "I do not believe that there is a country in the world where, in proportion to the population, there are so few ignorant and at the same time so few learned individuals."

ONE HUNDRED and forty years later, the frenetic drive to alter the last part of his observation has created a national schooling anxiety rivaled only by our self-conscious inferiority after the surprise launching of Sputnik. Today, the horror that surrounds the mere utterance of the word "drop out" attests to the mob psychosis that pushes for more, more and still more schooling for the larger and larger number of apathetic non-scholars who now inhabit our high schools, colleges and graduate degree programs.

The "drop out conspiracy," as it must be called, is a nefarious gambit that is being foisted on the

nation by an educational establishment and well-propagandized parents who now equate learning solely with the number of school years completed.

In 1932, only 612 of every 1,000 school children reached the 9th grade, and barely 30 percent of the original 1,000 completed high school. The need for more educational achievement was obvious, and by 1942 we had achieved excellent results: 803 of every 1,000 children finished grade school and almost half — 467 — graduated from high school.

BUT THESE RESULTS only stimulated the true believer in total schooling for everyone. During the post-war 1940's and 50's, those who refused to gain a high school diploma infuriated the new "neat society," and the mass media ground out its litany of attack — no diploma means no work, no money, no life. The educational poker game upped its ante to 12th grade for everyone, and those seeking the possible life style of a Ben Franklin, Edison, Lincoln, Mark Twain, Eric Hoffer were cast in the role of the modern social pariah — the drop-outs. The massive propaganda campaign that followed created our present exaggerated, if not insane, state of higher schooling.

This June 2.9 million of the 3.7 million children who entered first grade 12 years ago will graduate from high school, a 75 percent completion rate that leaves only one in four youngsters shamed by the "drop-out" epithet. In fact, by 1977, the

U.S. Office of Education advises me, we will graduate 86 percent of all our youngsters.

IS THE DROP-OUT conspirator — whose very flesh crawls at the thought of an unclaimed diploma — satisfied with this incredible performance? Hardly. The miracle of diplomarized mass non-education has merely stimulated his ingenuity. Without many high school drop-outs to be pious about, why not just escalate educationally? They have, and the result is a searing new definition of a social failure, one that adds even more sting to momma's prophetic admonition. It is the modern "college drop-out!"

This strange new concept bears explaining. Anyone who does not proceed continuously from nursery school through 19 years of school culminating in a baccalaureate degree is a "drop-out" from life, a misfit who doesn't realize that total formal education — regardless of intellect or personal persuasion — is the only permissible, parental and societal-approved status goal.

America's swollen and sweating 2,530 college campuses testify to this myopic criteria. From a student college population of 1,365,000 in the fall of 1939, college attendance rose only moderately by 1954 to 2,469,000.

BUT THE BABY BOOM and the inordinate success of the conspiracy of "study study" has brought today's college enrollment to a gargantuan 6,758,000. New figures given to me from a forthcoming Office of Education projection defy even the motherly imagination — 10,000,000 mainly under-matured college students flooding the campuses by the fall of 1977.

What a field day for the pristine finger pointers who are convinced that everyone can be shamed by societal conformity. The day is not far off when the non-college graduate will happily babble psychological excuses for his "obvious" life and mind failure. The new figures already show who will be the victims of the new shame: the present fifth grade class of 4.2 million youngsters. It is expected that at least half of them will attend college in the first 10 million campus crunch and fight their way, not toward the enlightenment of a B.A. or M.A., but to keep from being scurrilously defamed as "drop outs."

"College drop out" has already become an easy euphemism for social abnormality, a fact attested to by its psychiatric recognition. With the help of a National Institute of Mental Health grant, the William Alanson White Institute in New York has opened a psychiatric "College Drop Out Clinic" to diagnose and treat such "cases."

AMERICA'S MAGNIFICENT egalitarianism insists that we must all be superior and gifted. To do what our spirit insists, it is obvious that we will eventually graduate everyone from college. The new burden of educational quantity will then quickly shift to the graduate school, which is already being nosily viewed by nervous over-achieving mothers (and fathers). The 160,000 M.A.'s produced last year attest to the encroaching "abnormality" of not being a Master of Something.

Would you believe a Ph.D. "drop-out"? I must modestly state that in that arena of future shame, I am ahead of my time. I have already committed that sin of non-conformity.

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"Did you find what you were looking for...?"

The great genetics debate is finally starting

by Flora Lewis

New York — The debate on genetics is beginning in earnest, and not a moment too soon because the key science of human life is on the very threshold of the power to change all existence.

What the Atlantic Monthly named The Biological Revolution is upon us, and there is yet no clear guidance from religion, from philosophy, from the whole of custom and intuition that is called common sense, to help confront it.

Already, the discoveries of the geneticists are affecting ordinary American law and life.

IN MARYLAND RECENTLY, Carl R. Millard, 18, entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity to a charge of robbing a liquor store of \$150. His lawyer argued that he had an extra Y (male) chromosome, which some scientists say makes a man tend to criminality, and therefore wasn't responsible for his act. The judge convicted him anyway, ruling that the link between genetic abnormality and crime has not yet been fully proven.

But research is going on. The link seems likely. If it is proven, will all the criminal laws have to be reexamined? Should crime prevention then include tests of everybody's chromosomes to weed out the criminally-prone, or sterilize them, or treat them when genetics reaches capacity?

In Chicago, Dr. Henry L. Nadler examined a patient in his Northwestern University genetics clinic. She was recently married, the only one in her family of four sisters who was normal. The others had been mongoloids and she wanted

to know whether she would have defective babies. He studied her chromosomes and family history and said the chance was 30 percent.

SHE DECIDED TO TAKE the chance and returned for an examination when she was 3½ months pregnant. It showed that the baby would be a boy, and a mongoloid. She had an abortion, followed by another pregnancy and another examination. It showed she would have a healthy, normal girl, and she did.

In Dallas, Dr. Robert L. Sinsheimer of the California Institute of Technology explained to an audience of biologists a genetic technique which might prevent diabetes.

Within a generation or two, genetics offers the likelihood of wiping out diabetes, enormously reducing and perhaps wiping out mental retardation reducing crime to an unforeseeable extent. It offers control of the sex of future babies, probably the elimination of some forms of insanity, the elimination of many diseases.

TO SOME VISIONARY scientists, it offers the key answer to problems which befall us because of what we call human nature. One of them, Joshua Lederberg, has even given a name to a future science of "human engineering." He calls it "euphenics," by which a wide variety of heredity traits would be changed by changing some chromosomes in the human embryo.

The possibilities for good are evident, overwhelming and tantalizingly near. So biologists are arguing with growing intensity for the chance to make these extraordinary break-throughs in genetics.

The possibilities for evil are as obvious, and as overwhelming.

The question is so pressing that it has become a new department of philosophy. Princeton theologian Paul Ramsey has been appointed professor of "genetic ethics" at Georgetown University Medical School. Harvard historian Donald Fleming reports in an Atlantic Monthly article that Ramsey opposes any genetic tampering as "a violation of man." But Fleming goes on to point out that at present, "many babies get born with catastrophic genes that are not exactly an enhancement of man."

FLEMING SAYS, "The will to cooperate in being biologically perfect is likely to take the place in the hierarchy of values that used to be occupied by being humbly submissive to spiritual counselors chastising the sinner for his own salvation. The new form of spiritual sloth will be not to want to be bodily perfect and genetically improved. The new avarice will be to cherish our miserable hoard of genes and favor the children that resemble us."

Is it the noblest aspiration of all, to perfect man, or the most outrageous hubris of all, doomed to destroy man? For all the specific benefits in terms of sickness and despair, it is terrifying because the ultimate question must be who can, who will, decide which changes are for good and which for evil. The scientists tend to shrug and answer that in the meantime they can make people healthier, the rest is not up to them.

But there is not a great deal more time to face that ultimate question before, in fact, the ultimate power to remake man lies in someone's hands.

Slightly irreverent

... by John Fryar

Louie the Graffiti Man is little known outside his own profession.

Louie is hired by the local taverns to decorate the walls of the city's restaurants. He lives in a world of short quotations designed to lighten and edify whoever comes across his handiwork.

BUT WAIT, one might say: aren't these ungrammatical, off-color scrawlings actually the work of Lincoln's college population? That's what Louie and the proprietors would like you to believe.

"You gotta be kidding!" Louie sputters. "You mean to say you think college kids really have the mentality to think up this graffiti, these masterpieces?"

The short, meticulously dressed man points out that if John walls were left up to students, the art would consist mostly of "John loves Mary" and "Tri Sigs are best."

"THEY GOT no imagination," Louie says. "And their spelling is atrocious. And their idea of what

Louie the Graffiti Man

goes on in the world comes from the Nebraskan and Little Orphan Annie."

Armed with pocketknives and pencils, Louie begins work in the early hours of the morning. As he deftly retraces some of his golden greats and deeply etches new nuggets, periodically referring to a notebook overflowing with newspaper clippings.

"What hurts is the lack of recognition," Louie moans "but I got a public that Sheldon Art Gallery couldn't touch."

LOUIE DEMANDS of the incredulous reporter, "You still don't believe I'm responsible for all these places? Look at this way. In all the times you've been in these places, how often have you seen someone writing these things on the walls, huh?"

He adds an underline to his newest creation, "God is alive and posing as Secretary of Agriculture." "They gotta look spontaneous," Louie says.

Occasionally, he sprinkles in telephone numbers to break the monotony. When dialed, they usually turn out to be the Lincoln police department or Abel Hall.

HE ANGRILY crosses out a "support your local police." "Amateurs," he scorns. "spoil the

effect." He pencils in, "Support underprivileged militants."

"You also gotta be abreast of the times," Louie adds. The Graffiti Man then scrawls, "Prime with the Pill."

"My satisfaction in this line of work comes when a drunk walks out of the can with a smile on his face."

Not content with the domain of the bathroom bowl, Louie branches into related fields. His workers are responsible for chalking the sidewalks before major campus events. Cohorts add finishing touches to Union posters. (Surreptitious comments on homecoming candidates are their specialty.)

LOUIE ALSO contributes to literary fields, but he is not yet satisfied. "Today, Cliff's Notes; tomorrow, the Cornhusker," he cries with a gleam in his eye.

"In my own little way, I am helping to maintain college traditions without leaving them to the incompetency of college students," Louie says.

Even so, Louie seems to lead a somewhat normal life. He has no difficulty in Crib conversations, being always ready with a cryptic comment.

And as for dates, all the Graffiti Man has to say is, "Why don't you come downtown with me for a beer and I'll show you my etchings."

Campus opinion...

Solution: children shouldn't read at all

Dear editor:

My first reaction to the proposed ban of *Huckleberry Finn* in the Nebraska school system was an assumption that it was presented with the same legislative sense of humor as the bill to make the grasshopper the State insect.

However, after a more careful study, I discovered that it was a sincere effort on the part of Senator Danner to protect the school age youth of this progressive state from a knowledge of certain unpleasant situations that existed in the past and to a degree yet today.

There is a fine line between art and everything else produced under the auspices of literature. One of the books that has come under fire from Senator Danner, *Huckleberry Finn*, is a work of art. Ernest Hemingway said it much more profoundly.

This bill and the 2,000 other bills introduced indicate to me a desire of our legislature to build a Nebraska-style 1984. There can only be two other explanations:

(1) The senators feel they must justify their pay increase (one of the 2,000 bills); or

(2) My own opinion (though had William Jennings Bryan said it, the irony would have been much greater) is that it is not yet proven, my fellow Nebraskans, that the fine people of Tennessee have a corner on ignorance. For those senators unable to connect Mr. Bryan and Tennessee, the secret word for the day is "monkey."

MY WHOLE POINT in writing this is not to poke fun at the quality or intelligence of the state senators. They do that well enough without my help. Any satire I could try to construct from this sad state could never be as funny as their original material, the legislative bills.

What I should like to propose is that they stop trying to outdo each other in introducing the largest number or most preposterous bill and try constructively to conserve this state's richest natural resource, its youth. It seems to me that rather than question what the youth read, question how the youth learning to read at all will benefit the state.

MY MODEST PROPOSAL is not that the children should or should not read *Huckleberry Finn*, but that they should not be allowed to read at all.

You may laugh at this at first, my fellow Nebraskans, but think it through. First, by not educating our children we will reduce one of the greatest tax drains in the state — education. Second, the uneducated youth will be economically forced to remain in the state, so we will end the exodus of Nebraska's educated young people to the more progressive states. Third, and most important, by having uneducated youth we will save our tired state senators countless hours of bickering over bills concerning the youth, such as what age is socially, morally, religiously, economically and educationally right for them to join the state senators and the rest of the state intelligentsia in being intelligently responsible.

BUT THESE QUESTIONS are never raised and never answered, so with moral consciences burning with the desire to do right, the good people of Nebraska pour their hard-earned tax money into an educational system they aren't ready to, let alone desirous of, receiving a sufficient return from.

The question, then, is do we want to try to create a sufficiently seductive society to induce to remain in Nebraska the only noticeable Nebraska product that is made without the help of the sun? Or shall we just throw in the towel and regress rather than spending money to remain static?

Fred Starrett