



bob russell

# America's clown mayor

Omaha is Nebraska's only city. Now some of you may cry out, "Well, what about Lincoln?" But when you finally think about it, you realize that Lincoln is just a small town, a Fremont times four.

Lincoln has problems, but Omaha has city problems. Lincoln has crisp clean air. In Omaha, one's nose is assaulted with the sweet, pungent and reeking smell of paunch manure treatment plants, among other various odors. Lincoln has a predominantly black residential area, but Omaha has a black ghetto.

Big cities seem to have problems with mayors. New York City has Lindsay, who at least keeps the people thinking things are getting better, although they are getting worse. Chicago has Daley, the last of the dumpy, big city political bosses. And on down the line to lesser Lindsays and Daleys. That is, until we reach Omaha.

Omaha has Mayor Leahy, America's only clown mayor. You wouldn't think so from his appearance. Mayor Leahy is somewhat over six feet tall, has semi-short flicked over dark hair, has a face that can get lost in a crowd, wears Barry Goldwater black 'horn rimmed' glasses, is just a bit portly and wears dark suits. You just wouldn't suspect for a moment.

Mayor Leahy's rise into politics began a few years ago. He made the civic club circuit speaking about pornography and railing against all the trash and filth coming into Omaha. He was fairly well known by the time

he ran for mayor several years ago. So Mr. Leahy, civic club speaker, became Mayor Leahy, protector of the minds and bodies of the children and citizens of Omaha.

It didn't take Mayor Leahy long to develop his style. He already had it, only after becoming mayor, he had a bigger podium. Mayor Leahy took to protecting the minds and bodies of everyone while the city was going to pot (in more ways than one).

In his first couple of years as mayor, the only trash, filth, and other types of perversion Leahy had to rail against were several bookstores and the local film palace of flesh. But soon he had ample material with the advent of the Pussycat Theatre and the topless joints.

The Pussycat Theatre is a small place, not seating great numbers of people. But Mayor Leahy just couldn't bear letting twenty-five or fifty dirty old men pass their time in such a place, so he made closing-down the Pussycat Theatre his main order of business for some time. Unfortunately, from Mayor Leahy's point of view, the courts have seen otherwise and the dirty old men of downtown Omaha can still frequent this den of iniquity.

The topless places were Mayor Leahy's next target. He couldn't bear to have the female breast displayed in public. Just imagine what might happen.

Mayor Leahy at last found his victory here. The City Council passed an ordinance

against topless, bottemless, etc. dancing.

But Mayor Leahy is not a narrow man. He decided that pornography was a good issue, but decided to entertain the people in yet other new and imaginative ways.

Last year President Nixon was in Omaha for some sort of speech. Mayor Leahy was somehow not invited to meet Nixon at the airport or to sit with Nixon at the speech. So Mayor Leahy went to the airport and clung to the fence, thereby gaining public sympathy at such a slight.

Each Saturday night on channel 3, KMTV, old crusty horror and mystery films are dusted off and presented as the Creature Feature. This squat man with green makeup is host for the show, doing blurbs for odds and ends and chortling wickedly. At the start of each show the host has a body under a sheet on his operating table. One night this body was Mayor Leahy. And now the children's Sunday morning TV fare is enlivened by Mayor Leahy reading the funnies.

Not all cities can be as lucky as Omaha, to have a mayor that can entertain the people's minds off the real problems. Not all cities are lucky as Omaha, for Omaha has America's only Clown Mayor.

## LETTERS to the NEBRASKAN

Brevity in letters is requested and the Daily Nebraskan reserves the right to condense letters. All letters must be accompanied by writer's true name but may be submitted for publication under a pen name or initials. However, letters will be printed under a pen name or initials at the editor's discretion.

Dear Editor,

Steve Strasser's recent editorial on married student housing (*The Daily Nebraskan*, Nov. 4) sets forth ill-considered premises, and wrongly concludes that there is little the University can or should do to relieve the housing plight of Lincoln's poor.

It is first suggested that Lincoln's size justifies a diminished tender of married student housing. But this does not explain why Boulder (67,000 pop.), about half Lincoln's size, offers 10 times as much married student housing, or why Norman (52,000 pop.), one-third Lincoln's size, has 14 times as much married student housing.

More significantly, it is meaningless to assert that the University's role is negated by the existence of more off-campus housing than other Big-Eight campuses enjoy. There are also more people off-campus, and the real issue is the housing vacancy rate. Lincoln's is estimated at 1.5 per cent. A "healthy" vacancy rate is generally considered to be 5 per cent.

A second major premise is that married students don't compete for low-income housing, the editorial apparently accepting the stereotype of a welfare mother with four children. The fact, however, is that in Lancaster County the average family on welfare consists of a single adult with about 2.2 children. This suggests that at least half of the 1500 ADC families would compete with married students for one and two-bedroom units in Lincoln.

It is an even greater piece of folly to declare that the housing dilemma belongs to the city. While the city must share the problem, it did not ask the University to expand from 8 to 20 thousand in the past decade, or to remove 160 low-rent houses from the Malone area. While the University's primary role is education, it must bear responsibility for its collateral effects. To argue otherwise suggests the analogy of a manufacturer pumping pollutants into

public waterways but blandly disclaiming any duty beyond that owned to product and employee.

More married-student housing will not solve Lincoln's low-income housing problems. It is true that new construction of expensive housing and unmarried students also put pressure on low-income housing. But it is a first step that could be taken --- with available federal funds --- to alleviate the problem.

As one who, on behalf of low-income tenants, has dealt with the city, the Housing Authority, and the University for the past two years, I would suggest the following realities:

- 1) The City has not expended a single local cent on low-income housing construction or subsidy, and cannot without prior voter approval. But it has indicated it is not disposed to place such a proposition on the ballot and support it.
- 2) The Housing Authority has very ably maximized low-income housing supported by federal funds, but has demonstrated, in my view, its proclivity to house low-income married students who are "better housekeepers."
- 3) The University, prior to its recent and laudatory initiative, has tended to pull its head out of the sand just long enough to declare that there is no low-income housing problem within its range of responsibility.

If this trinity would, respectively, place on the ballot the issue of expending local funds on public housing, reorganize priorities to secondarily house the voluntary (student) poor, and build some married student housing, hundreds of low-income families with little light in every day would find a new day a dawning.

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