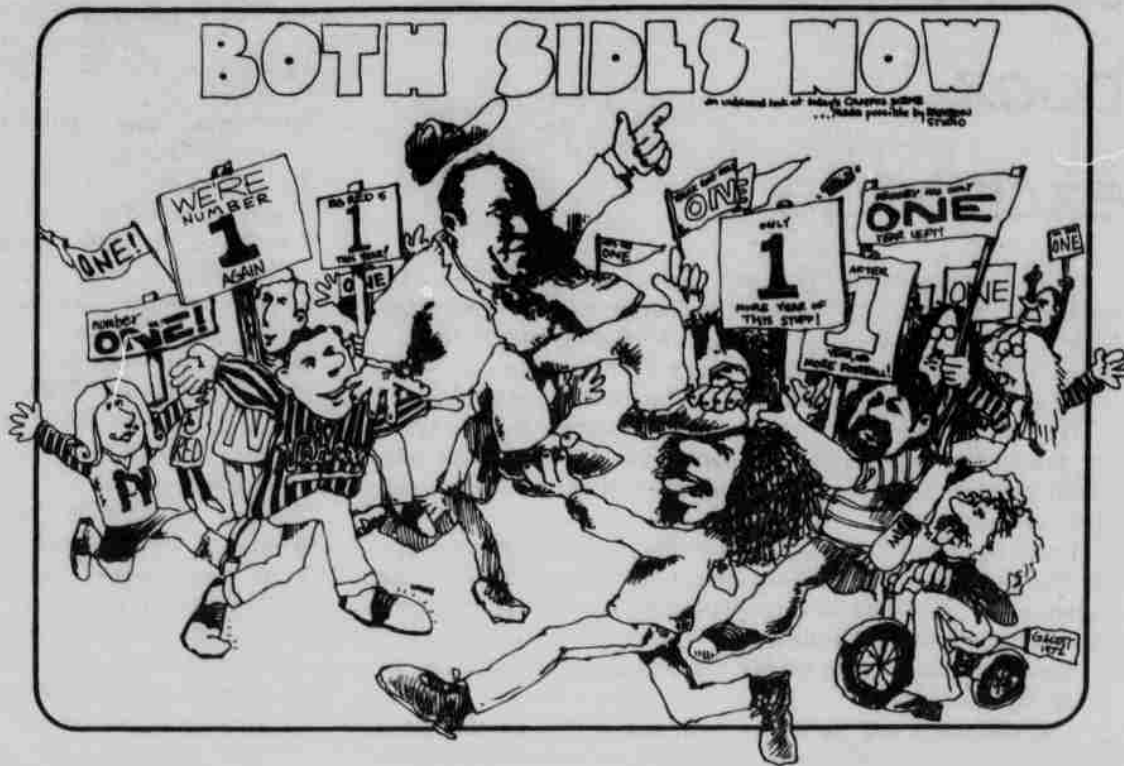


editorial opinion page



The debate among the members of the low income community, the University and the City of Lincoln concerning housing issues has gone on at great length.

Recently a large number of groups representing the many different facets of the low-income community banded together to form the Poorhouse Coalition.

This week the Coalition presented to the University a document referred to as a "declaration of responsibility." Its chief purpose is to help establish a working relationship between UNL and the poor people of Lincoln.

The members of the Coalition are to be commended for approaching the University with a document that the administration will find acceptable. It is open-ended and calls specifically for Poorhouse Coalition representation and consultation when University decisions are pending in the areas of

University expansion into the community.

The Coalition is also asking that the University determine the amount of housing needed to eliminate competition between University students and low income people. This study should be made and deserves the participation of the low income community.

A request that the Regents' committee on housing be activated with specific charges is very reasonable. The committee was created in November by the Regents with the intention of solving the current dilemmas facing the University community in the areas of low-income and student housing.

The chairman of the committee, Regent Ed Schwartzkopf, has since applied for a federal grant to subsidize an in-depth study of the current housing situation. The Poorhouse Coalition maintains that this grant is now unnecessary. Apparently they feel that enough studies have been completed and data is sufficient to warrant solution of the entire problem now facing the community.

As long as the grant has been requested, processing of the application need not be terminated. However, the Coalition does make a good point in saying that there are currently a number of studies which have been completed. These studies should be gathered by the Regents' committee and considered at great length. If conclusions can be drawn from them and a resolution to the current problem found, then progress toward the solution can begin.

Either way, the housing issue has lingered on for quite some time now. The Poorhouse Coalition has shown its sincere interest in working with the University towards a solution. The University should now go to work on the task in finding that solution.

The best way for the University administration to accomplish this would be to endorse the "Declaration of Responsibility" set forth by the Poorhouse Coalition.

editorial

Barry Pilger

Janet White is a senior majoring in journalism and psychology, and minoring in political science and English. Her extra curricular involvement has centered on organizations such as Student Action Front and the Student Volunteer Council.

Politically, White describes herself as "liberal," and sympathizes with the Berrigans, Ellsberg and the philosophies of Nietzsche, Joyce and Walter Lippman.

Have you ever noticed how forums for open discussion can turn into arenas for dramatic misrepresentation?

The dramatic and the misrepresented tend to distract people from the crux of an issue. Maybe that's why the most absorbing question in the student fees controversy has so far eluded judicious public examination.

If the issue is relieved of pragmatic considerations, one-sided arguments, and political second-meanings, the question remains: What manner of representation justifies taxation and tax control?

The taxes in this case are student fees. The representative organizations to be examined are student government and the State Legislature. The taxpayers are the students and their parents, potentially 60,000 people who may contribute to student fees.

How representative must student organizations be to legitimately spend student fees? Should the Legislature regulate student fees when it represents far more interests than those of the fee-payers?

Historically, taxation has been justified by representation. Mandatory fees are criticized on the grounds that student self-government is not representative. Such criticism implies that current organizations constrain student representation. It overlooks the political reality that student government is as representative as student participation enables it to be.

ASUN senators and executives are made politically accountable in every spring election. Every student is eligible to be a member of conference-planning committees, and to interview for the chairmanship.

The most significant factor in student representation is manpower—who is committed to doing what. Student representatives must operate on the basis of what they perceive to be the student interest. In most cases, student senators are unable to identify a constituency more specific than "the student body."

The great bulk of students on this campus appear to be neither actively in support of nor opposed to the actions of student organizations that use fees.

Although the Justice in America conference committee was open to any student who wished to be a member chairman Dennis Berkheim made specific invitations to a wide variety

of campus interest groups. The committee specifically directed itself to assembling a wide range of speakers for maximum interest to students.

In the latest count of speakers attending, 10 are liberals, 20 are conservatives, 9 are moderates, and 10 are radicals and revolutionaries, according to Berkheim.

Among speakers invited who have not confirmed whether or not they are coming are Senators Gerald Stromer, John DeCamp, Merlin (Duke) Snyder, and Regents Robert Prokop, James Moylan and Robert Koefoot.

It is true that, at most, three of the conservative speakers attending are of national prominence, contrasted to seven liberals and revolutionaries of national prominence.

This is not because prominent conservatives were not invited. There were 19 conservatives invited who will not be attending. Refusals came from well-known figures such as Phillip Crane, Carl Curtis and William and James Buckley. Of those liberals invited, 11 will not be attending.

The conference appears to be balanced; the committee acted representatively. ASUN appears to be representative of those who wish to be represented. If such efforts at self-government can be challenged, then the nature of the United States government itself may be challenged.

Both governments are operated by a combination of those who are elected and those who wish to administrate. Both governments are accountable to the degree that the people they serve make them accountable.

It may be argued that student government is not strictly representative of fee-payers because it does not represent parents who may contribute to student fees. This argument assumes that students do not reflect the interests of their parents. It also pertains to a very small part of student fees. About \$2 or four per cent of one semester's fees pay for student conferences; 80 cents goes to ASUN.

A far more pertinent question is whether the Legislature can justifiably eliminate student fees. The Legislature represents one and a half million Nebraskans, many of whom were offended by campus events last spring, the Time-Out Conference and now the Justice in America Conference. Only 40,000 of these constituents are parents of the 20,000 UNL students. No more than 60,000 Nebraskans or five per cent, could be paying student fees.

Although the Legislature is legally empowered to take the action proposed by Stromer, some serious questions arise about whether such action is in the spirit of the law. Not only are the people who pay these fees an unidentifiable fragment of those represented, but a definitive number of the student body that receives the student fee services has not been consulted by the Legislature.

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