

# guest opinion

Roy Baldwin is a junior majoring in political science. He has served two terms as an ASUN senator and this year is co-chairman of the ASUN Student Services Committee.

by Roy Baldwin

This year members of the Economic Development Committee of ASUN have laid the groundwork for an idea that will benefit nearly every student at UNL: the student co-op.

The idea is to form a consumer-co-operative that would raise money through the sale of membership shares and would sell products to its members at significantly lower than retail prices.

This year we have started the work that will, hopefully, bring the co-op into being. Next year, with the experience we've gained in the last few months, we'll be able to present the regents with a detailed proposal, possibly by late fall.

It's important for the student community to discuss what we want to do with our co-op once we get it going. Everyone agrees that saving money sounds great, but we should dig deeper to find the real reason why we should start the co-op. The most compelling reason deserves some explanation:

Students at this university alone spend nearly \$4 million per school year. That's a lot of money, and in economic terms it means that we have \$4 million in purchasing power that we can use in whatever way we want. Four million is a powerful force that could be used to bring about a lot of good things for us if we could hang on to it.

Of course, what happens is that our money gets spent

rather quickly, and any power we have to effect change dribbles away on food, clothing, entertainment and all the other things that people have to buy. The idea behind the co-op movement is that if we could devise a way to keep our money within the student community we'd be keeping our economic strength to work for us as well as getting lower prices.

If we could get together and set up a co-op bookstore, for instance, and if enough of us bought membership shares that would be redeemed in two or three years, every member could conceivably get a substantial discount on books - as much as ten per cent - once the store is organized.

If we all get together and pool our resources, we'll all save money. That's the kind of service ASUN should be performing for the students. That kind of service could become a reality within a year or two, if we start right now.

Those of us working on the idea must keep one thought in mind, though. We ought to ask ourselves why we're doing what we're doing. Are we getting into the co-op business for the thrill of the student community?

Are we doing it to create jobs and lower prices for students or just because we dig hearing cash registers ring? Some have been so closely involved in the project that they have begun to think of the co-op as an end in itself. What those people have forgotten is that the co-op shouldn't exist just to be selling things.

If we can't have a co-op with a sense of mission, oriented toward serving its members, we might as well not get into it.

Nobody gets mad anymore, they "overreact." The poor are now the "disadvantaged," and they live in "depressed socio-economic areas." The dull are "underachievers," and the hoodlum is "maladjusted."

It is an era of word sensitivity and euphemism. Negroes are to be called "Afro-Americans," garbage men are to be called "sanitation engineers," and mailmen are to be called "postal carriers."

Euphemisms and jargon are the ripples and currents of a swiftly changing culture. But language is more than a product or a reflection of cultural evolution; it actively shapes culture and thought by patterning perceptions.

The power of words is so pervasive and rooted that few people are conscious of it. According to philosopher Anatol Rapoport, the symbolic nature of language is one agent in war atrocities.

"The chemist is not torturing a child; he is working on a scientific problem," Rapoport writes. "The flyer who drops napalm bombs is not torturing or killing anybody; he is fighting in the defense of freedom or simply doing his job."

Language is a perceptual screen. It classifies experience, and allows people to perceive only certain realities, whether or not they are deliberately rationalizing.

The most illuminating studies of language as a perceptual grid have compared differing cultures. One experiment was done with Japanese women living in America. The women spoke both Japanese and English, and were questioned by the same bilingual interviewer on two separate occasions. One interview was done entirely in Japanese, the other in English. The

women were asked to complete sentences. They completed them in distinct and unrelated ways depending on what language they were speaking.

In completing the sentence, "When my wishes conflict with my family's..." one woman said in Japanese, "it is a time of great unhappiness." In English, she said, "I do what I want."

One respondent completed the sentence, "Real friends should..." with "help each other" in Japanese. In the English interview, she completed it, "be very frank."

The English language is saturated with words and expressions of time and space. Americans "waste" time and "save" time; they record history, pay wages and schedule future events in units of time. As indispensable as minutes, hours and days may seem, some cultures conceive time as immeasurable and indivisible. The Hopi Indian, for instance, has no schedule and may spend years building an adobe house, according to one anthropologist.

Non-spatial concepts are often expressed in spatial language terms. Such familiar English phrases are a "thread of thought," "level of understanding," or "broad interpretation." One study revealed that 20 per cent of all the words in an English dictionary had spatial connotations. Such words included "together," "distant," "under," "linked" and "congruent."

By classifying experience, words shape thought. They reflect and perpetuate a culture and its values. S.I. Hayakawa, president of San Francisco College, notes that the labelling of ethnic groups reflects social perceptions.

"When is a person a 'Negro'?" he questions. "By the definition accepted in

the United States, any person with even a small amount of 'Negro blood'... is a 'Negro.' It would be exactly as justifiable to say that any person with even a small amount of 'white blood' is 'white'... the former system of classification suits the purposes of those making the classification."

The English language encourages a two-valued orientation to the world. Note the popular assertion that there are two sides to every question, and the abundance of abstract opposites: good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, strong and weak.

Hayakawa asserts that the Nazi government was popularized with such a two-valued orientation. "If good is 'absolutely good' and evil is 'absolutely evil' the logic of a primitive two-valued orientation demands that 'evil' be exterminated by every means available. Murdering Jews becomes, under this orientation, a moral duty..."

Americans appear similarly susceptible to the two-valued oversimplification. Current liberal and conservative rhetoric can often be reduced to sophisticated versions of "We are the good guys and they are the bad guys."

Words are no more than a set of symbols with some meaningful relationship to the real world. They are as often the tools of misunderstanding as they are the tools of communication. With more complete awareness of the power and characteristics of language, as a perceptual grid and a communications tool, the misunderstanding may be relieved. The interdependence of people in a highly-organized, specialized mass society makes accurate communication imperative for every responsible participant.

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Dear editor:

I am disappointed in Friday's editorial endorsing Rep. Charles Thone for two reasons.

First, it was too early. Other candidates running against Thone have not been approached by the Daily Nebraskan staff for interviews to determine their credentials. The Daily Nebraskan should endorse candidates after the filing deadline March 10.

Secondly, I do not entirely agree that Thone has always served his constituent interests. His voting record shows a few surprises concerning his record on civil rights, employment, education, consumer rights and the draft.

Thone in 1971 voted against an amendment repealing the President's authority to induct men into the armed services, and voted for a two year draft extension.

On education, he voted against a bill which would have increased appropriations for the Office of Education. On employment, Thone voted against a public works extension and an increase for funds. On consumer rights, Thone voted against an amendment which would have strengthened consumer rights before federal agencies.

This example in consumer rights is contradictory to Thone's statement, "Some of the little things in service work are gratifying;... being able to turn around some aspect of the federal government in favor of the constituent."

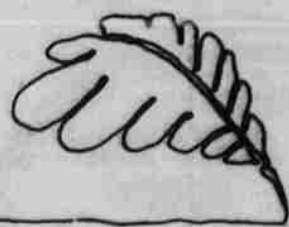
On civil rights, Thone voted against giving the Equal Opportunities Commission cease and desist powers, which

would have given the federal commission more power to prevent employment discrimination based on race, religion, sex, color, creed and national origin. Instead, he supported the administration's version, strongly opposed by civil rights forces. Thone also voted against a comprehensive child care bill, the Equal Rights Amendment and a bill to end sex discrimination in higher education.

In the words of Kathy Braeman, another nominee running against Thone, such issues involve "human values of vital importance to all voters in our district—men and women."

The Daily Nebraskan has more homework to do before it endorses candidates this soon.

Celeste Wiseblood



to the  
editor

