



## Elks' dodge

Long critics of discrimination at any level, members of the Human Relations Insight League (HRIL) are at it again. They recently wrote a letter to the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Lodge No. 80 in Lincoln expressing their continuing displeasure with the Elks Club's "whites only" membership clause.

In the communique, HRIL recognized the "positive contributions Elks Lodge No. 80 has made to the Lincoln community," and said they also would "prefer not to challenge the Elks Club's liquor license this year," and would "prefer not to continue our court action."

The letter went on to cite the difficulty which HRIL members have in accepting the fact that the Lincoln lodge indeed supports the deletion of the racist membership clause from the Elks' national constitution, but at the same time closes its doors to certain people on the basis of skin color.

The Elks Club responded to the letter from HRIL by noting that the entire Nebraska delegation attending the July 1971 national Elk convention led the fight to encourage passage of an amendment to the Elks national constitution. The amendment would have deleted the racial clause pertaining to membership. The amendment failed to pass, however, since a two-thirds margin was needed and only 55 per cent of the national delegates favored it.

The Lincoln Elks Lodge also cited the fact that

they feel more comfortable working "within the organization" in order to change it, since the withdrawal of affiliation from the national organization would rule out participation at the national level. Apparently the Lincoln lodge has been successful in initiating some community programs that have been adopted nationwide.

While the efforts of Nebraska Elks and efforts of members of Lincoln Lodge No. 80 to eliminate discrimination from their organization can be applauded, other situations deserve much less favor.

The Elks still discriminate against women in addition to racial minorities. Nowhere does the Elks constitution state that women can participate in Elks club functions without the sponsorship of a man. Any non-white may participate with the sponsorship of a member.

It remains clear that our society still has a hard time interpreting that age old phrase, "all men (and women) are created equal." Erasure of discriminatory membership clauses in civic organizations is a start.

The HRIL is to be commended for its efforts to bring this problem to the attention of the community, and to the Elks Lodge itself repeatedly. Although it may take every effort short of confrontation to change the Elks national constitution, the Lincoln Elks Lodge should prepare themselves to do just that.

Barry Pitzer

editorial

More happened at Saturday's NU Board of Regents meeting than reporters reported, cameras filmed or participants realized. Confrontation politics brought events to an impasse.

The confrontation began when supporters of Milton White took the floor. The climax of tension and pressure came at the end of White's delivery, exceptionally articulate and persuasive, when he challenged the Board of Regents with this question: "Is there a regent who can say he represents these people?" He gestured to about 100 of his supporters sitting in rows behind the brightly lit meeting table. The question was repeated three times, followed each time by vacuous silence.

Motionless, eyes averted, the regents and University administrators were wordless. There was an almost tangible expectation that they would remain silent. People had become the prisoners of a sequence of events, puppets in an irreversible melodrama. Its conclusion was the formation of the people's regents—a gallant paper tiger that struggled to its feet in an impromptu meeting called by White.

As the people's regents made uncertain

nominations, the Board of Regents adjourned and dissipated, along with the cameras, the reporters, and the rest in attendance. It was as though the audience had walked out while the actors were still playing. Out of the spotlight the group made an earnest pretense of having newfound power, but every face mirrored the unmistakable loss of valuable political leverage.

The scenario is a rich one. It does not indict either side, but it illustrates a situation where two parties have progressively become unable to respond to each other.

Confrontation is limited as a means of implementing reform or grassroots change. Its advantage and intent is to enlist the coverage of the mass media, calling the public attention to some inequity, and pressuring power structures to respond appropriately.

The negative effects of confrontations can be devastating. A confrontation may be considered a public argument where each party is more concerned with justifying himself to the audience than he is in resolving conflict of interest. Intelligent bargaining becomes impossible as each party makes more and more rigid

demands of the other.

Confrontations are tension-producing situations. They engender emotional, short-sighted reactions to pressure.

The disadvantages of confrontations are obvious. Yet flexible and humanized reform methods are rarely employed, perhaps because reformers are unable to free themselves from traditional political tactics. Another reason is that alternatives to confrontation and demonstrations offer much less self-satisfaction and group momentum.

There is little intoxicating power in convincing your mother and father that Communism has both strong and weak points — as does capitalism. There is little exhilaration in non-violent communication that acknowledges partial truth in the opposition's argument.

The task of changing attitudes is indispensable groundwork for any widespread political reform. Traditional reform tactics may secure short-term, temporarily-satisfying goals, but if they retard attitude change their positive effects are neutralized. The confrontation has a dangerous potential for becoming a tactic of procrastination rather than an instrument for meaningful reform.

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