

Norden Dam won't solve the problem

staff
suggestion
box

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by A.J. McClanahan

People have been arguing about the proposed Norden Dam for years. And it will probably be built for just that reason.

It's difficult for most groups to maintain any kind of opposition for a sustained period, especially when the people opposed to the dam are rather small groups with limited funds. Compare this to those in favor of the dam who have thousands of dollars—mostly federal monies—and you have a dam which almost certainly will be built.

The dam, which would be on the Niobrara River between Valentine and Springview, is being sponsored by the North Central Nebraska Reclamation District. That means it's being built mainly for irrigation purposes.

The reason water is needed for irrigation is because people in the Atkinson-O'Neill area have a declining water table—because they are irrigating rather extensively now.

All dams have a given life expectancy because the dam itself traps sediment, and that sediment eventually builds up behind the dam. The reservoir gets wider and wider and sooner or later turns into marshland. This is what is happening to Lewis and Clark Reservoir and it explains why the town of Niobrara must be moved.

What's going to happen when the Norden Dam eventually silts up and all the water creates marshland? Will technology suddenly come up with another "bright idea" and resolve the irrigation problem? It doesn't seem possible.

Water is one of Nebraska's most valuable resources. The fact that people simply can say, "Well, our water table is declining so we need a dam to solve the problem," sounds like a doctor saying he is only going to make the patient feel better and not worry about curing him. It's difficult to imagine that Nebraskans can pass over such a problem so lightly.

Those supporting the dam give more reasons than just irrigation for the dam's existence. It is called a "multiple purpose project," with recreational opportunities, improved wildlife habitat and more annual income to attract young people offered as other purposes.

Anyone who has ever hiked, canoed, or just visited the area in question has to admit as far as recreation goes, the area is ideal. It's ideal for anyone who wants a beautiful, unpolluted, natural setting. Besides, there are enough dams in Nebraska for anyone interested in water skiing or motor boating. Is riding in a motor boat so terribly important?

A brochure published by the North Central Nebraska Reclamation District and the Niobrara River Basin

Development Association says, "Boating, water skiing, camping, hiking and fishing will all be of prime quality at Norden Reservoir." But except for motor boating and water skiing, the others mentioned are already of prime quality.

Even if any of those things could be improved, however, how long will any of those benefits last? People have got to stop thinking in terms of the next 10 or 20 years and consider the next hundred. In less than a hundred years the whole reservoir will be useless.

What about improving the wildlife habitat? According to Sierra Club members and other concerned individuals, stands of Paper Birch are found along the banks of the Niobrara that normally do not grow this far south. In fact, the area is a mixing area of many northern and southern plants and animals. Some of these exhibit characteristics found few other places, and most of them would be at least partially destroyed by the dam.

The Niobrara River has high banks that other rivers in Nebraska do not. There are small waterfalls found along the banks that no other rivers in Nebraska exhibit to such a degree. Proponents of the dam argue that only so many miles will be inundated, but botanists and biologists agree that damming a river has numerous effects—mostly adverse—many miles up and down the river. Many of these are not noticed until years later.

There are also fossil remains in the area which have not yet been extensively studied. In fact the area is unique in its fossils because it is near the southernmost reaches of the last glacial period. Don't Nebraskans care about this type of research or is it just not important enough to them?

How then is the habitat improved? Even if it were possible for a dam to improve wildlife, which it doesn't, it only lasts until the area becomes marshland.

As far as attracting young people to remain in the O'Neill area, it is the opinion of the author that young people are remaining in Nebraska in greater numbers. As the demise of large urban areas continues, it will be only natural for more young people to remain in rural areas.

The point of all this is that people must begin to think in terms of more than profiting for a few years. We cannot continue to destroy areas by damming rivers and simply hoping the reservoir will not die in our lifetimes. And even though the proposed dam is some distance from Lincoln, it is not something the University can simply overlook. Damming affects all Nebraskans.

to the editor



Letters appear in the Daily Nebraskan at the editor's discretion. A letter's appearance is based on its timeliness, originality, coherence and interest. All letters must be accompanied by the writer's true name, but may be submitted for publication under a pen name or initials. Use of such letters will be determined by the editor. Brevity is encouraged. All letters are subject to condensation and editing.

Dear editor,

As I was striding nonchalantly across campus yesterday (Nov. 27th) I was suddenly confronted by a foreign obstacle—a veritable barrier, so to speak. Being astute by nature, I was quick to discern that it was a fence. The strategic location of said fence succeeded in separating me from my chosen destination. I quickly concluded, therefore, the necessity of surmounting the obstacle.

Lacking the agility of a pole vaulter, hurdler or other miscellaneous and sundry jock, I surmised the wisdom in locating a portal through which I might gain entrance. Following that plan of action, I therefore began a quest for just such a gate. Much to my chagrin, however, I discovered that such an entry did not exist and that to travel a distance of what might ordinarily be a few yards (and a very speedy journey at that) one must hike completely around said fence. While I am not adverse to exercise per se, I can see little reasoning behind the quasi-obstacle course created by this latest addition to our fair campus.

Therefore, I hoped that perhaps a few well chosen words from you might possibly result in incorporating within the fence merely a small door through which students, faculty, straying cattle, etc. might pass.

Deanna L. Dittmar

Editor's note: There's now an opening in the fence, but its creation was not due to Daily Nebraskan influence. Sorry.

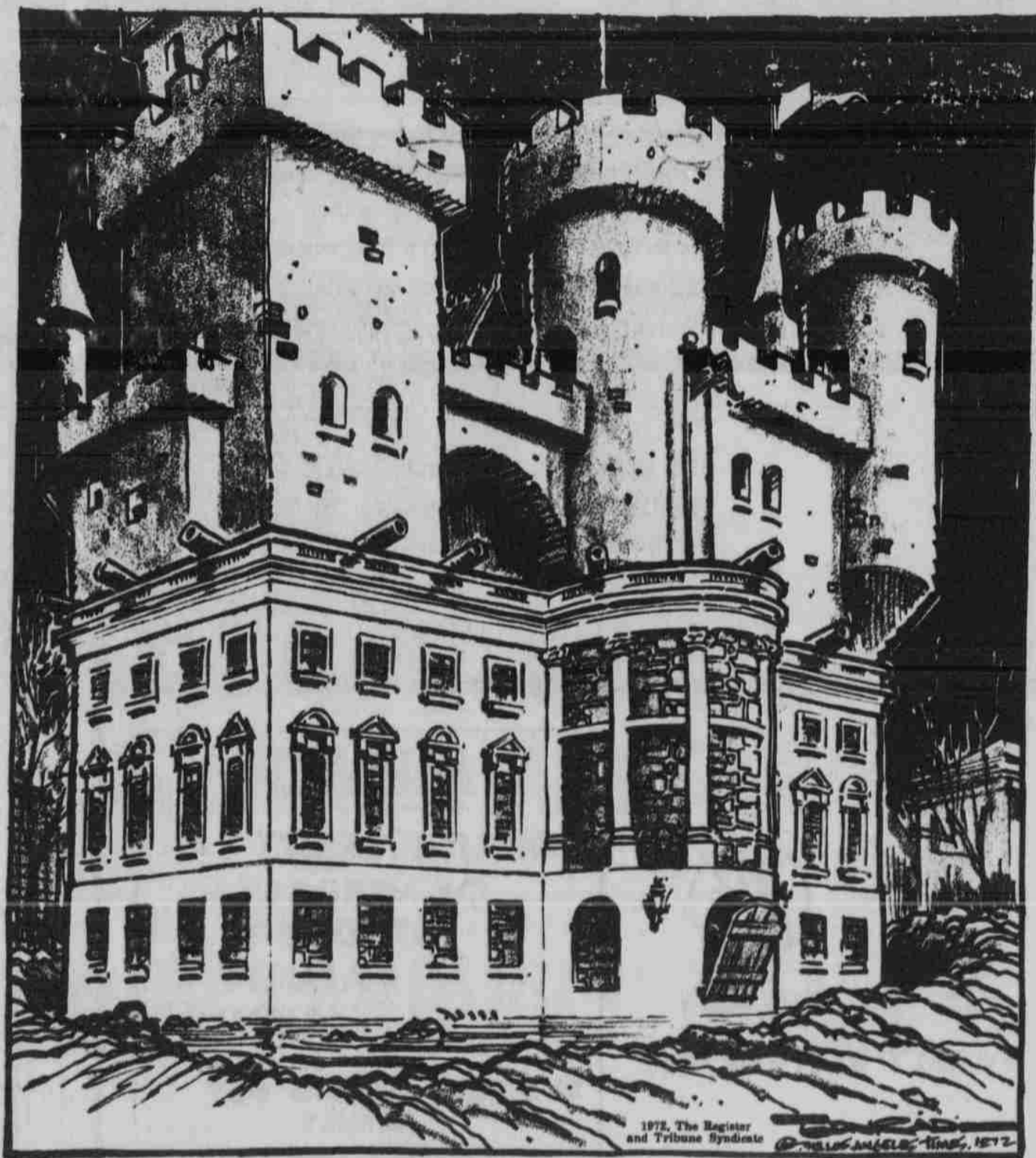
Misconceptions

Dear editor,

The Student Council on Health (SCH) is an active advisory group working with the University Health Center. Lately we have noticed that there have been several misconceptions about what we do.

The council was organized in an effort to improve communications between the students, as consumers, and the Health Center, as the providers of health care. This is intended to prevent misunderstandings by students about their health care, along with attempting to inform the Health Center about the needs and concerns of students.

The council is a partnership between students and staff, aiming for the common goal of a healthy student population.



White House reorganization

Contrary to a misconception that the SCH only "searches for gripes," we view ourselves as a positive aid to the students and the staff in providing needed services. In this capacity we have found the staff to be very open and receptive to suggestions.

For example, we feel we have been helpful in initiating the new intake procedures which reduce the time and information required in processing at the reception desk. We also are involved in investigating the evaluation procedures of the Health Center (e.g., suggestion box, gripe phone, evaluation sheet, medical ombudsman).

We recognize that there are other areas of student

interest and concern about their health. Consequently, we urge students to share with us any input they have. This can be done either by attending our regular Friday meetings at 3:30, 4 University Health Center or by sending a letter to Suite 345, Nebraska Union.

Few students are concerned about their health until they are sick, troubled or injured. We feel that a constant communication between the consumers and the providers will greatly improve the functioning of the University.

Student Council on Health
Wayne Svoboda, Chairperson