

Election by district may affect students

by Adella Wacker

"I don't think the students are going to have any bearing whatsoever," County Election Commissioner Bill Davidson said Thursday about future Lincoln City Council elections if members are chosen by district.

On the other hand, state Sen. Steve Fowler of Lincoln said that because of current housing patterns, UNL students could affect two or three district council elections.

Predictions vary about the effect that district elections might have on UNL student candidacies and the effect student voting might have on elections, if Amendment Number one passes.

If Amendment Number one is passed in the May 1 general city election, Lincoln will begin electing council members by district in two years. Four council seats will be up for election in the March 1975 primary.

According to the amendments, a council member may run only in the district where he lives and be elected only by the voters in that district.

The City Council adopted a resolution March 5 to put the decision in the hands of Lincoln voters.

This action came after Lincoln Sens. Harold Simpson, Wally Barnett and Steve Fowler introduced a bill into the Legislature to require district elections in Lincoln. The bill was dropped.

Supporters of the bill pointed out that all seven City Council members now live south of "O" Street and said that city-wide elections didn't bring representation of all parts of Lincoln.

Council member Steve Cook defended the current system, saying it provides good overall representation on the basis of where council members work, not live.

One advantage listed by Council candidate John Robinson, is "it's a lot cheaper to run a campaign. It becomes very expensive to wage a campaign and advertising battle city wide," he said.

The amendment puts the decision about where the boundaries will be set for the seven districts into the hands of the next City Council.

Lincoln is now divided into a total of 166 voting precincts of about 500 persons each.

According to Robert F. Sittig, UNL associate professor of political science, students living in the dorms and the Greek houses currently make up two voting precincts.

Sittig, who is a member of the City Charter Revision Committee, said no matter how the city is divided students "probably would be a small portion of any district."

Council candidate Sue Bailey, housewife, said that district election might encourage more student voting.

Council candidate Thierstein said he is against the amendment because it might encourage ward politics and vote trading between districts for favors.

Candidate Max Denney, attorney, said he favors the suggested compromise of district election in the primary and city-wide council election in the general election.

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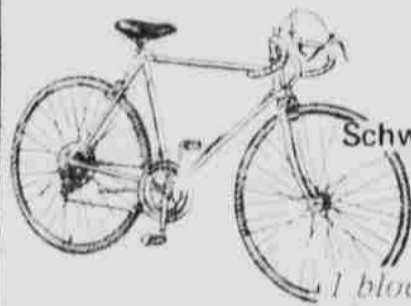
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