editorial opinion page

Tuition increase

The Committee for Economic Development Sunday released a report which recommends that tuition rates at institutions of higher learning be more than doubled. It also recommended that an expanded system of student aid be established to meet part of the increased costs.

The committee, a private organization supported by business and industry, made its recommendations in a report on financing and management of colleges. The report, which cost $400,000, follows the general direction of the Nixon administration, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the College Entrance Examination Board, according to the Associated Press.

Its recommendations, if carried through, would be a slap in the face of every college student and middle and lower class American family. The recommendations are unfeasible, unrealistic and inane.

College students now pay about one-third of their education costs and would pay two-thirds if the rate increase was approved. Tuition rates across the country are soaring. Within five years there has been almost a doubling of tuition charges at UNL alone. At the same time, there has been a steady cutting back of government financial aid. This year, UNL alone lost about $745,000 in government financial aid to students.

While the report wisely recommends that more aid be made available before the increases are instituted, it fails to say where the aid would come from. Considering the record, could the committee be naive enough to believe the federal government would help in this effort? And even if it did, where does the money for the grants and low-interest loans come from? It comes from the taxpayers, the same people being crippled financially while trying to meet current education costs.

The person who directed the study, Sterling M. McMurrin, dean of the University of Utah graduate school and a former U.S. commissioner of education, disagrees with the recommendations. He has said the increased tuition could put a college education out of reach for most middle income families.

One thing McMurrin and his committee have failed to realize is that these fears already are realities. The mean national income for a U.S. family is about $10,000 before taxes. After taxes, that figure is less than $8,500. The average college education costs about $2,100 a year, according to government statistics. How many middle-income families, straddled with rising prices, can afford to spend 20 per cent of their after-tax dollars on a college education?

The truth is that a college education already is outlandishly expensive. Instead of recommending increased tuition, the committee ought to have called for more state support to education and a new program of federal aid which would guarantee a college degree to all those who have the ability to earn one.

Michael (O.J.) Nelson

Postal rate hike won't cure mail maladies

john vihstadt different drummer

The 1970 reorganization that made the United States Postal Service an independent government corporation was heralded as a panacea to the nation's deteriorating mail services.

Once the Post Office was removed from the politicians and a presidentially appointed postmaster general, things were bound to get better, America was told. Obviously, just the opposite happened. Deliveries have never been slower, sloppier or more irregular.

And now the public is being asked to further subsidize the Postal Service's inadequacies and inefficiencies. As of New Year's Day, we probably will be paying two cents more to send first class letters, to 10 cents an ounce and a similar air mail jump, to 13 cents. Proposed increases for second class (magazines and newspapers), third class (advertising) and fourth class (books and records) material and parcel post will range from 6 per cent - 40 per cent. The hikes are to be spread over several years to mid-1977 or mid-1982, in line with the current five-year and 10-year schedule for previously approved rate boosts.

These new levels have yet to be approved. The Postal Rate Commission, Postal Service board of governors, and finally, the Cost of Living Council all must act on the requests. It is unlikely, though, that the increases will be revised enough to make any tangible difference.

In return, we are promised the usual "new and improved service." Goals include overnight airmail delivery between 500 major cities throughout the U.S., parcel post delivery on the second day within 150 miles and coast-to-coast within a week.

Although inflationary pressures are a primary impetus towards the need for higher rates (labor costs are up 17 per cent thanks to exorbitant wage increases), Congressman Charles Thone (R-Neb.) recently pointed to another factor. The Postal Service intends to spend roughly $19 million on advertising this fiscal year.

This gigantic Madison Avenue sell job (four ad agencies are employed) is to get persons to want to buy faster mail service, such as special delivery options, at higher rates and to boost sales of luxuries like commemorative stamps. A million dollars has been allocated to stimulate zip code use, something which largely has been discredited by surveys showing that non-zip mail travels no slower than does coded material.

Instead of asking, the Postal Service ought to [illegible]. If it cannot assure rapid and consistent service as the public demands, then more of its functions, particularly the first class delivery long shielded by law, should be opened to private competition. Indeed, because it gets mail there quicker and cheaper, such private firms as United Parcel Service now move more packages than does the Post Office.

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I predicted in my January 25 column that nothing of substance would come of Juan Peron's return to his native Argentina after 17 years in exile. Alas, such was not to be the case. As the old caudillo returns to power his actions are being felt far outside his country's borders. This makes the Argentine-United States relations symposium to be at the Nebraska Union Thursday and Friday of timely significance. Why not drop by for a couple of sessions?