

Studying the Big 8

Gov. J.J. Exon has proposed that a commission be established to study the best schools in the Big 8 and determine how well NU compares to them. The proposal, which has been endorsed wholeheartedly by the NU Board of Regents, will include a study of how much tax support each institution receives and how it is spent.

The idea for the study is a good one. NU President D.B. Varner has said frequently that the goal of the state system should be to be at the top of the Big 8 before the end of the decade. And he has lauded the proposed study as being something which "will give (NU administrators) a framework" in which to work toward this goal.

As noted by the Lincoln *Sunday Journal and Star*, it will be difficult to define "quality" when trying to compare the campuses. But the effort is praiseworthy, and Exon should be congratulated for proposing it.

It should take about three months to make the study, according to UNL officials. But when the study is completed, will the University, the regents, the governor, the Legislature and Nebraska citizens stand behind it? It could create an awkward situation

for all of them.

For example, what if the study shows that NU is bureaucratically top-heavy? Will administrators be willing to oust other administrators? What if it shows that an adjustment needs to be made in teaching loads; will the University be willing to fire tenured professors?

If the study shows that NU needs more state support, will the governor be willing to abandon his conservative spending policy and recommend a hefty boost in the NU budget? Will the Legislature support such a move? And if a boost is appropriated, will the people of the state tolerate the subsequent and much-hated tax increase?

The answer to all these questions is probably no. But if the University is to become at least an academic welterweight, then that must not be the case. Once the study commission makes its recommendations, they must be heeded. To talk of goals but not to make progress toward them is a flaw in our political system which should not be allowed to become part of the Nebraska education system as well.

Michael (O.J.) Nelson

Barefoot from city—a Mexican homecoming

What is a homecoming? It is a return from the new and the strange to the old and familiar. It is a long bus ride with the knowledge that little sister will be waiting at the bus stop, so you won't have to walk alone, and of a collage of suddenly familiar sights and sounds and smells. To others, it means the necessary return to the rural home of their parents and a rather inactive time, kept from being boring only by the inevitable difference due to age and perspective.

In Mexico I viewed another homecoming. We had left the port city of Coatzacoalcos early in the morning, traveling to Minatitlan. It was from this city that river crafts headed down stream into the interior. We arrived early and walked among the milling market day crowds near the dock, buying mangos and generally passing the hours, as we waited for a craft we were told was heading downriver. The craft was named (oddly enough) the *Lusitania*, and was a small converted cattle boat which carried freight and a few passengers down the old Coatzacoalcos River. In the hold were two rough benches, one along each side. There sat the old man, the children and the mothers with babies who were headed from the city back to their villages.

The two river banks were as varied as the travelers'

faces. One side was a low, grassy bank which betrayed its marshy nature. The other side had a high bluff-like bank. On this side, small clusters of grass houses stood, the homes to which my fellow travelers were returning.

A little farther down river a young, nicely-dressed



but shy Indian girl had stood up and walked carefully toward the passage. She was home. She stood on the prow in her pantsuit and black patent leather shoes, as the boat slowly nosed toward the shore. A lone, simply dressed man waited at the river's edge. His

unconcealed pride and expectation made it clear she was his little girl.

The gangplank of our boat was simply a rough 2 x 10 which unceremoniously was tossed to the bank at each stop. But here the plank didn't quite reach and settled in the soggy mud clay at the edge of the water. The girl hesitated. It wasn't hard to guess the value of the shoes to her. Our bosun had a twelve-foot pole he used to help guide the boat in shallow channels. He thrust this down into the marginal mud, forming a sort of handrail, but still the girl hesitated.

By this time the father had moved to the foot of the gangplank. Standing ankle-deep in the mud, he smiled a reassuring smile and held out his two worn hands. She lowered her head and stepped out of her shoes. Then, clutching the shoes in one hand, she began down the ramp. She grabbed her father's hands and jumped, as he pulled her toward him. She cleared the mud, her clothes and shoes unspoiled.

Yet as her father hugged her and they left, walking up the path to the grass house of the family, I couldn't help but think how much difference the shoes made. The barefoot girl had returned home from the city.



to the editor

Dear editor,

In this time of increased emphasis on energy conservation, I thought it would be of value to pass along several ways in which energy use can be reduced as regards household heating. The following suggestions have been compiled from publication No. 143A of the Office of Consumer Affairs entitled "7 Ways to Reduce Fuel Consumption in Household Heating...Through Energy Conservation."

1. Weatherstrip and caulk around all windows and doors. This can lead to a 15-30 per cent reduction of your heating bill by stopping warm air leakage or cold air infiltration.
2. Install storm windows (or insulating glass). This can cut in half the heat that needlessly is lost through the windows of your house.
3. Install overhead and sidewall insulation. To insulate a ceiling under an unfloored and well-ventilated attic, place batts on the ceiling or spread loose insulation over it. If the attic is floored, the insulation can be accomplished by raising a few floor boards and blowing in loose insulation. In the case of sidewall insulation expert technical advice should be sought.
4. Maintain an efficient heating plant. This includes having the heat exchange surfaces of your heating plant cleaned when needed and having the combustion air adjustments checked or improved by heating specialists periodically. Air filters, if used, also should be kept as clean as possible.
5. Close window draperies at night to reduce heat loss.
6. Close and seal tightly against air leakage from occupied spaces all openings into the attic (remember, warm air rises). Keep outdoor air vents open in attics and crawl-spaces in winter to prevent condensation of moisture in or on insulation or other building materials.
7. Turn off electrical appliances when they are not needed. Repair leaking hot water faucets. Lower the thermostat setting in your house or apartment at night.

Although many of these suggestions rely on action taken by the landlord in the case of students who rent, the tenant can provide a valuable service by making the landlord aware of steps that can be taken to reduce consumption of fuel and by encouraging the landlord to take appropriate action.

Michael Gross
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ARABIAN NIGHTS

