



Economic crisis no fairy tale

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right turn

Once upon a time there was a country that was fighting for its economic life. Prices were going up as fast and as high as Jack's beanstalk, and not even the sky appeared to be the limit. Wage and price controls had been tried by the country's government in several forms and at several different times during the previous few years, but to no avail.

In addition to the problems of inflation, the wicked shieks from Arabia had brought an evil energy crisis down upon the people of the land, causing a severe strain on their already weakened economy.

As if all of this was not quite enough, the threat of a nationwide coal strike had further damaged the country's economic confidence.

Through all of this, the nation's confidence in the government's ability to deal with the many and varied economic problems had dropped almost as low as the level of its stock market.

Many people hoped the election to be held in the autumn of that dreadful year would solve all of their problems. But alas, before any elections there must be a campaign. And alas again, during any campaign there must be promises.

Many "champions of the people" campaigned during the election. They were in favor of more pay, shorter hours, better jobs, more financial security and more governmental health care.

They promised and they talked, and they talked and they promised, and they promised and they promised and they promised.... The people were very happy.

Of course, a few mean old ogres ran for office too. They had the nerve to say they would cut governmental spending, balance the budget and—oh, my—some even said they would raise taxes. What's more, they even seemed proud of their utterances.

I will not tell you what the end of the story is. It is so much more fun to visualize the ending in our own minds. But I will tell you the moral of the story. It is a quaint American expression I often heard as a child. If you don't know what it means, perhaps your Mummy or Daddy will take the time to explain it to you (and to themselves): "There is no such thing as a free lunch."

Fairy Tale Post Script: Elections have just been held in the United Kingdom and voters gave the Labor Party a narrow majority. It promised increased governmental services and the nationalization of free enterprises.

The British economy rivals Italy's as the sickest in all Europe and now seems guaranteed to surpass even the Italian plight. If one cannot see the historical similarity between our own country and England then he probably does not possess the word "mirror" in his vocabulary.

One may ask the question, "Which country, the U.S. or Great Britain, is the above fairy tale about?" The answer does not really matter, but the question should be rephrased.

"Which country, the U.S. or the United Kingdom, does this story concern?" The answer here matters very much. It concerns the future of both.

Ombudsman vital to UNL community

If bosses or superiors could solve problems by waving a magic wand, UNL would not need an ombudsman.

At the NU Board of Regents meeting Friday, Regent Ed Schwartzkopf said the Office of the Ombudsman should be abolished. Persons with complaints or problems should go to their superiors or to committees set up to handle those problems, Schwartzkopf said.

Fortunately, the other regents did not agree with him. They approved the appointment of Dan Babcock to fill the ombudsman position vacated by James Suter last summer.

In recommending the office be abolished, Schwartzkopf overlooked the most important reasons behind hiring an ombudsman.

Students who have complaints about professors often hesitate to criticize them directly because they fear their grades will be penalized. Faculty and staff members, likewise, hesitate to criticize their superiors because they might lose next year's raise or be given a bigger teaching load.

If persons complain to an ombudsman, he can protect their privacy while working to solve their problems. As an outsider, the ombudsman often can see both sides of the problem more clearly and fairly than the involved parties can.

When committees handle complaints, the process is often much more complicated than it need be.

Various student, faculty and staff organizations first must appoint committee members, then a convenient meeting time must be chosen. In the past, these meetings have been either unnecessarily delayed because of scheduling conflicts or held without a quorum. Neither method is good for solving immediate problems.

In addition, committees often seem impersonal and surrounded by red tape to the person with a complaint.

The ombudsman, in contrast, has regular office hours and is readily available to handle problems. The complainer feels more reassured his complaint will remain confidential because he is talking to only one person rather than to a committee.

And, instead of having to track down the proper group to hear his problems, the person can bring almost any concern to the ombudsman. In the past, the ombudsman has handled complaints ranging from "rip-off" landlords to the University Health Center.

In 1973-74, about 1,150 persons used the Office of the Ombudsman, according to a report made by Suter. That seems proof enough the office provides a valuable service to the University.

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