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Union space threatened

Students might not recognize the Nebraska Union in a few years. The building probably will be easy to confuse with Lincoln's other shopping centers.

Still more space in the Union will be snatched away from students and used by commercial businesses, if Union Director Al Bennett has his way. Gateway Bank opened in the Union this fall, using space formerly allotted for a study lounge and men's restroom.

The two additional businesses that might locate in the Union would take away space now used for the women's lounge and the Union Program Office. The remodeling also would require combining the Women's Resource Center and adjoining study lounge and moving the Union south desk and magazine rack, according to plans drawn up by the Physical Plant. The remodeling would cost about \$160,440.

By allowing retail businesses to locate in the southwest corner, the Union would not have to depend as much on student fees, according to Bennett.

That might be true, but students also no longer could depend on the Union to consider their needs before those of merchants.

Allowing commercial profit-making businesses to have space originally intended for University use is contrary to the Union's purpose.

In the future, providing space for even more businesses could be rationalized as a convenience for students and faculty, just as the Gateway Bank was. Where will it all end? The message "Buy Me!" hits students too often already. Why must it also come to campus?

Plans for remodeling still are tentative, but, if approved, the work could begin in July.

Bennett first must get the approval of the Union Board, an advisory group to the union director. Ken Bader, vice chancellor for student affairs and the Central Planning Committee also must approve the plans.

Students who object to businesses encroaching on space that now is theirs should protest to Mike McGahan, Union Board president, or to Bader. Letters to McGahan should be sent to the Union. Those to Bader can be mailed to the Administration Building.

Jane Owens



Dear Editor,

In regard to the letter from "Another Abel Fable" (*Daily Nebraskan* Oct. 17), which questioned the ingenuity and calibre of the Cornhusker Marching Band: It seems there is a certain maturity lacking in an individual who is so intent on being cute in his criticisms that he overlooks the purpose of a critique—the betterment of that which he is attacking. In addition, it is no more than courteous to sign one's name to such published criticism.

"Abel Fable's" letter was so contrived it was insulting to the reader. It offered no suggestions as to how to improve the band. It was so full of neat phrases it was incoherent. All it accomplished was to slam a fine organization.

Patricia Ann Jacobberger

Insurance company part of 'stop ERA' effort

"The well-financed, well-organized, and unconscionable Stop ERA effort could certainly prove to be another 'Watergate,' or an extension thereof."

Ann K. Justice

The Lincoln chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) recently has published a report which examines in detail the evidence uncovered after the February 1973 rescission of the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

"The Insurance Connection with 'Stop ERA' Forces", edited by Ann K. Justice, begins with a general survey of the sexism practiced by the insurance industry, then proceeds to the local level, dropping names of interesting political figures along the way.

Why are insurance companies across the country so concerned about the Equal Rights Amendment? The U.S. Senate anti-trust and monopoly subcommittee hearings in May and June of 1972 revealed the inequitable practices used by the majority of insurance companies in their dealings with women.

Sales manuals referred to women as "marginal employees working merely for convenience" and "delicately balanced machines eagerly awaiting a breakdown". Discrimination in insurance policies included offering women who qualify for disability insurance policies which were inferior to those available to men, yet charging the women higher premiums. The policies also exclude payment for disabilities relating to pregnancy, childbirth, miscarriage, or other disabilities resulting from "organs peculiar to females". (Men, however, can collect benefits for prostate operations.)

The subcommittee's report said: "The entire insurance industry relies on 'myths' about women—including the old myth that women lose more sick days than men. Most detailed statistical studies indicate, in fact, that men lose more sick days than women."

But the NOW report points out that insurance companies make their profits by "excluding from coverage those persons—women, older persons, the handicapped, or other 'clunkers'—who are likely to need treatment."

If the ERA were ratified and so forced a revision in laws applying to insurance companies, lower profits might result. It is this old devil money which provoked the insurance companies' concern over the ERA.

So what has all this got to do with Lincoln, Ne.? Richard Proud of Omaha, the leader of the movement to "withdraw" Nebraska's support of the ERA, is, and was during the legislative session, an employee of Mutual of Omaha, "the world's largest health and accident insurer". The \$1.6 billion company owns stocks and bonds in school districts and universities and state boards of education, to mention a few.

amy struthers
broad side

Upon examining Proud's records, NOW discovered that during the 1973 legislative session, he introduced no bills of his own, but initiated the Legislative Resolution to repeal the ERA.

In the 1974 session, he introduced no bills and had the most absentees of any legislator, because he was traveling around the country speaking against the ERA. He has said that these trips were paid for by "women taking up nickels and dimes and dollars." In answer to those who suggested Mutual of Omaha picked up the tab, he said "those are the lies of all the libbers who believe in abortion...that's all the pro-abortion people know is lies, lies, lies." (Proud always had a difficult time keeping the abortion issue separated from the ERA.)

The most interesting thing about the report is the question it asks: "Did Nebraska legislators really 'cave in' to pressure from an orchestrated letter-writing campaign from only 6% of Nebraska's towns? Or from the lobbying of Proud and company? Or was there a bigger payoff, and by whom?"

No concrete answer is found to the question, but some interesting evidence is presented.

The amendment had 40 organizations of Nebraska supporting it, while only six opposed it. These six included The John Birch Society, Young Americans for Freedom, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Nebraska School Improvement Organization (remember that name).

Correspondence to legislators and letters-to-editors in newspapers ran two to one in favor of the ERA. A Nebraska opinion poll found that of those interviewed, 47% supported the ERA, while 29% opposed it and 24% were undecided.

NOW went on to investigate the mail files of the legislators. They found the letters opposing the ERA came primarily from a few rural communities in northeast Nebraska "where 'closed-door' anti-ERA meetings had been conducted by the Nebraska School Improvement Association."

Every third letter against the ERA repeated the phrase "It forces the wishes of the noisy few upon the silent but contented masses". NOW discovered that this was the same phrase used by a woman whose husband heads the Lincoln chapter of the John Birch Society.

This whole business has a curious link with the gubernatorial elections this November. Anne Batchelder, Republican lieutenant governor candidate, is heiress to the Continental Assurance Co., a casualty insurance company based in Chicago. She has been a vehement opposer of the ERA. She is a director of the Freedom's Foundation of Valley Forge, Pa., which in 1972 gave an award to the John Birch Society for its "God, Family, and Country" rally.

Her husband, Clifton Batchelder, is an old buddy of S.H. "Zeke" Brauer, executive secretary of the Nebraska School Improvement Association. Certain threads which run throughout the story begin to appear.

It came as quite a shock to me, in reading all the above, that the corruption we abhorred in the Nixon administration may exist in our own little Unicameral. And like Watergate, we never will know just what really happened to the ERA.