



to the editor

Dear editor:

I would like to clarify several points made in the Wednesday, Jan. 15 article on page one of the Daily Nebraskan regarding the Student Legal Services Center.

First, the article may have left the impression that only women students have consumer problems with misrepresentations by salesmen. Actually, home solicitation sales are a big problem for students of both sexes, and china and silverware salesmen in women's living units are only part of a much larger problem.

Secondly, the article left the impression that our office is quite concerned about security for client's records. That is correct, although the article may have overstated the case. The attorney-client relationship of confidentiality is important, and for that reason the student files in our office are kept locked and the access is restricted to SLSC personnel.

Contrary to the impression left by the article, our office has never encountered problems with the confidentiality of phone conversations and students should never worry about discussing sensitive matters in an emergency. Yet a telephone conversation always entails the possibility, however remote, that someone on either end of the line, or in between, will innocently and inadvertently pick up parts of a conversation that the client would only want the attorney to hear.

However, that is not the main reason our office discourages phone advice except in cases of emergency. Legal problems are often much more complex than they appear, and we therefore try to give every student a full one-half hour personal interview with an attorney so that every legal aspect of the problem can be covered. Legal advice by phone, when it is incomplete or hurried, may be worse than no advice at all.

The SLSC has also had many problems in the past with large numbers of non-students attempting to receive and phone advice and this is unfair to the students at the University who pay for the service through their student fees.

I might also add that there is a SLSC office on East Campus on Thursday afternoons in Rooms 2 and 3 of the C.I. Thompson Library. Appointments for that office may be made by calling the SLSC in the Nebraska Union.

David Rasmussen

Nebraska water—inland sea?

(Editor's note: Rob Aiken is the Environmental Task Force chairman.)

"Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink," Coleridge would be hard put to apply his phrase to Nebraska.

Estimates say there is enough underground water to make Nebraska an inland sea 39 feet deep. In fact, a few years ago, Loyd K. Fischer, professor of agricultural economics, said if we used 3 million acre-feet of water each year our water would last until the year 2525. That's without counting the 8 million acre-feet that recharge the water table each year.

If there's so much water, why are some farmers hard hit by droughts such as last summer's? And why did 75 of our 93 counties lose underground water in 1971?

One reason is the 1,600 wells registered each year from 1966 to 1971. Many pivot irrigation systems are going up and millions of acres are put into irrigation.

Another reason Fischer mentioned is the "quirky location" of water. Some farmers can drill deep and come up with long-lived wells while others run dry even though they drill at the same depth.

Evidently our fabled underground water isn't a simple ocean of sea and sand. It is something closer to a jumble of lakes and ponds—some deep and some shallow. Some lakes drain into others. So the lucky guy that bought land above a deep lake can irrigate almost endlessly while the fellow above a shallow water table is stuck with a well that might run dry in mid-August.

In fact, Fischer said, heavy irrigation in central Nebraska caused Frenchman Creek to dry up, the reservoir downstream ran out of water and the farmers who irrigated from the reservoir were out of luck. That might be cause to take the problem to the courts if the farmers can raise the cash to meet legal fees.

When farmers in the O'Neill area and folks around York see the water table going down as much as 25 to 50 feet, they contemplate damming the Niobrara River (a great place for

canoeing) and the Platte River—where we see the Sandhill Cranes each spring.

That's fine if you don't mind flooding more farmland and spending lots of tax money on construction. But it doesn't make sense if something else can be done.

Fischer said people in Cow Valley, Ore., had the same problem of falling water tables and got out of the mess by keeping a closer watch on the water pumped out of the supply. It makes sense. If 1,000 acre-feet of water flow into an aquifer (a water-bearing rock or rock formation), 1,000 acre-feet can be pumped out without lowering the water table. But if somebody gets excited and pumps out 2,000 acre-feet, the water table has to fall and eventually the wells will run dry—which is just what's been happening here. Dry wells shouldn't surprise anyone because we've been managing our underground water to make the wells run dry.

guest opinion

There's a bill in the Legislature to regulate water use so all Nebraskans will have enough water.

Of course, Nebraska farmers are interested in this sort of thing but we shouldn't expect irrigators to readily submit to regulation. They've spent lots of money buying irrigation systems and it's doubtful they'll cut back if it costs them some money—even if they would pump the aquifers dry. Dry wells last summer testify to that. Any compromise will have to be worked out in the Legislature.

This Saturday at 9 a.m., the Nebraska Wildlife Federation is sponsoring a Water-Use workshop at the Yancey Hotel in Grand Island. Many farmers and some agriculture students are bound to be there, and it should be interesting. Water seems to be everywhere but its abundance can't make up for mismanagement.

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