

Drinkers need help, not jail

The last thing an alcoholic needs is a night in jail. Piling the stigma of incarceration on top of his already acute family, social and working problems is more likely to drive him to drink than to cure him.

Therein lies the problem. Our criminal justice system has always found it easier to punish someone who does wrong than to help someone do right. And tossing drunks in a drunk tank overnight is more punishment than help. Punishment is something an alcoholic is already getting enough of.

LB237, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Wally Barnett, would decriminalize public intoxication and treat alcoholism as the disease it is rather than the crime some wish it to be.

The bill proposes that people picked up for public drunkenness be taken to a detoxification center rather than to jail. At the centers the person would be treated, fed and given a place to sleep. A stay of more than 72 hours would be voluntary.

While details for setting up the centers will be left until after the bill is passed, the program would be under the direction of the director of the division on alcoholism of the Department of Public Institutions. The centers would be set up

within the state's six mental health regions.

The beauty of the idea lies in the increased concern it would direct to the welfare of alcoholics. Under present law, persons found drunk in public go to jail until they sober up or are released to an attorney or their own recognizance.

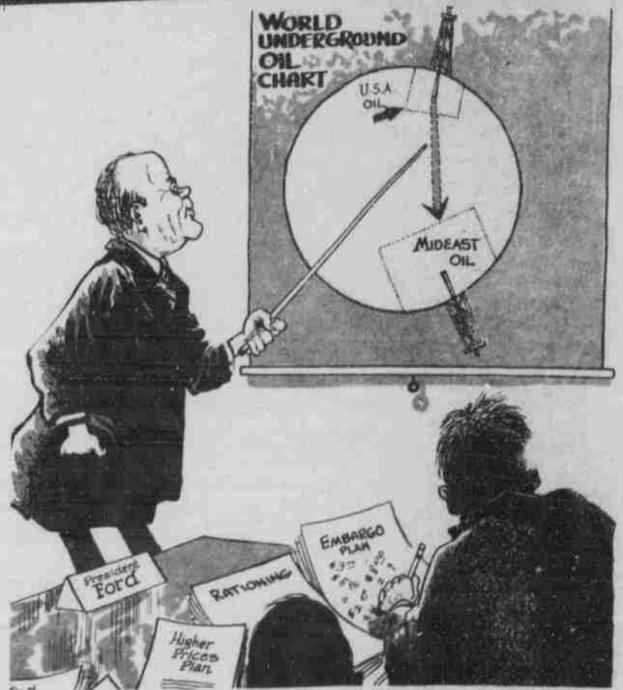
A court appearance the next day usually brings a fine or the option of participating in a court-approved program such as counseling or Alcoholics Anonymous. If the person proves to the court that he participated in the program, the case is usually dismissed.

Essentially Barnett's bill takes away the option. The alcoholic doesn't get to choose between the rehabilitation program and a stiff sentence. If he's caught drunk publicly, he's automatically in the program.

The bill should be passed. In its final form, some distinction should be made between the alcoholic and the first offender. One-time drunks wouldn't appreciate being treated like alcoholics.

Alcoholism has been treated as a crime long enough. It is time we realized the real crime lies in locking up alcoholics without trying to help them.

Wes Albers



"A remarkable new solution has come to my attention—deeper oil wells."

Women's Pages defended as 'alternative press'

Editor's note: Vicki Bagrowski is a senior majoring in journalism.

Amy Struthers devoted her editorial Friday to a critique of Women's Pages, put out by the University Women's Action Group (UWAG). Any publication must expect to be criticized, but, as one who has been involved in Women's Pages since its inception, I feel Struthers' criticisms are based on misinformation and faulty reasoning.

First, I am aware of no "problems which have plagued the paper," other than the time and sweat it takes to put out a publication. While any student group would greatly appreciate more funding, UWAG has always put aside the necessary \$120 per issue.

Struthers' charge that lack of funds results in a "similar off-and-on management" of the Women's Resource Center is totally groundless. There are five full-time work-study women, plus several volunteers who manage the Center, allowing it to be open at least seven hours a day, five days a week.

Additionally, staff meetings, held every Thursday afternoon, yield productive decisions and the continuity needed to carry on the many projects the resource center has underway. Perhaps Struthers thinks that, because there are often groups of people conversing in the center, there is no management to it. Let me assure her this is not the case. The atmosphere maintained in the resource center encourages informal conversation yet there is always someone there to help those persons who come to the center.

As to Women's Pages, it is primarily a paper directed at women, and that includes avowed

feminists as well as those who are not. We try to include articles of interest to a wide spectrum of women. Therefore, our articles tend to be anything but feminist rhetoric.

artist, therefore we cull graphics from other sources, mostly other women's newspapers. We have also tried to use several half-tone photographs, done by a local woman. As to the bold headlines, may I remind her that, unlike the *Daily Nebraskan*, we use no headliner or elaborate equipment. We use press-on letters, not known for their overwhelming variety of type faces.

Women's Pages has never pretended to be another Lincoln Journal-Star. We have ideas and information to share, and we try to do it in an appealing format. Four journalists do all the editing and layout, but most of the actual writing is done by nonjournalists. And why not? Are journalists the only people who have a right to communicate their ideas in print? From what I've seen, many nonjournalists write quite well.

Perhaps the suggestion that we "come back to Nebraska and leave the underground papers to Berkeley" best betrays Struthers' lack of knowledge about the alternative press, and what a paper such as Women's Pages is trying to do. The special interest paper, in alternative journalism, revolves around a central theme. It never claims to be an objective establishment offshoot. What it does claim to do is bring its readers information that they do not normally have access to in the straight press. Also, it allows for in-depth articles that cannot, because of lack of space, appear in the straight press.

If Struthers thinks students in Nebraska, mostly

from rural towns, are incapable of appreciating such articles, or think them too radical, then I think she is insulting their intelligence. Rape, health care, marriage and divorce, job pressures—these things affect women everywhere. These are the keys to the women's liberation movement, not rhetoric. What other women are saying and doing, and why, is the essence of the movement.

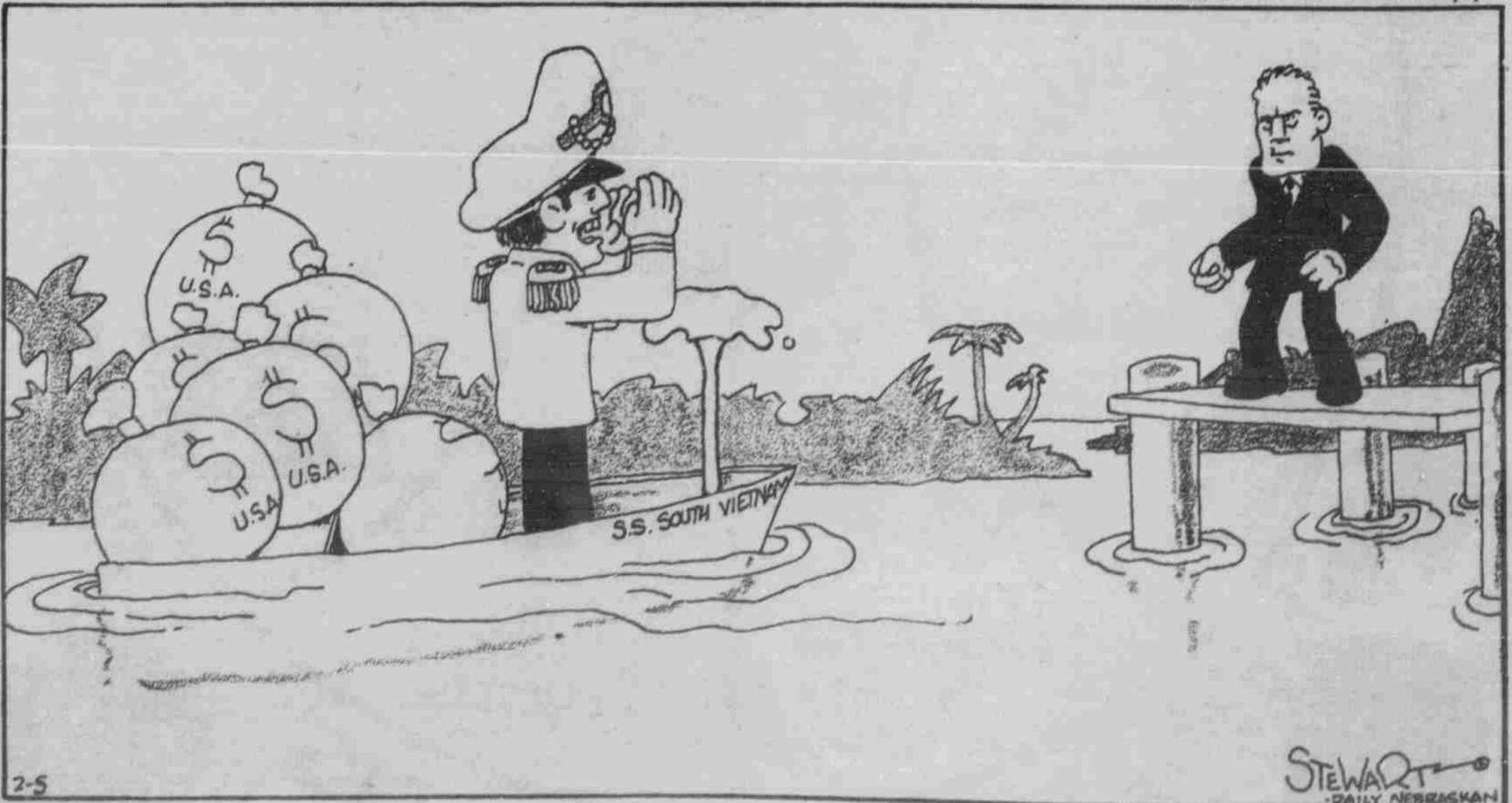
Struthers' biggest criticism seems to be the layout of the paper. May I remind her that we have no paid

guest opinion

These special interest papers appear wherever people think; wherever people have found information worth communicating. The alternative press flourishes in Chicago, St. Louis, Iowa City, Des Moines, Omaha and even Lincoln. Berkeley has no special claim to the artform.

If the whole thing boils down to improving our image, so we are palatable to the average University woman, then I think we need to ask just who the average University woman is. Is she a woman who would rather have a feminine-looking paper (in the traditional sense) full of flourishing script and cutesy graphics? Or is she a woman who wants to know how to protect herself against rape, how to find a competent doctor and why it's so difficult for her to get a loan from a bank?

If it's the latter, then she will find it in our paper.



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