

editorial

We, ourselves in 'First Down' debate

After we saw Friday's Lincoln Star sports page, on which Star Sports Editor Bob Owens encouraged loyal Nebraska football fans not to buy "First Down," we had a lengthy debate with ourselves over whether to respond editorially to Owens' column.

We decided, after much discussion, not to respond. But we thought you might be interested in how the debate went.

(We entered striding angrily, the Lincoln Star clutched in our fist.)

We: (somewhat incoherent, waving paper recklessly) Have you seen this... this...!

Ourselves: (calmly looking up from our chaotic desks) Huh?

We: Bob Owens' "Sports Signals" today! It's misleading, it's inaccurate, it's scurrilous and opprobrious and...

Ourselves: Now, now. What exactly seems to be the problem?

We: (throwing the paper down and pointing a shaking finger at the column's third paragraph) Well, for one thing, he says our program is little more than a list of numbers. What about our photographs, our stories, our...

Ourselves: Let's not overreact. Perhaps Mr. Owens hasn't seen our product.

We: Maybe not, but what about this? (Points to another paragraph.) He says the Athletic Department's program sales, "as a result of this competition"—get that—dropped to 10,286 last season, then he says it was 29,950 less than in 1973. That's impossible, that's a blatant inaccuracy, that's...

Ourselves: That's probably a typographical error. I'm sure Mr. Owens mean to say 2,950 or some such figure.

We: Well, even so, what's \$3,000 to the Athletic Dept.? It's like spitting into the Pacific Ocean. And how do they know their sales wouldn't have dropped anyway because of the economic situation?

Ourselves: Please, you're overdramatizing the situation. Surely the Athletic Dept. has the right to be as concerned about money as anyone else.

We: But... but what about this paragraph, where he talks about the 12-cent commission received by the department's salespeople, "who are working their way through college"? Aren't our salespeople working their way through school, too? And he doesn't even mention the fact that our sellers get

a 40 to 50 per cent commission.

Ourselves: Mr. Owens couldn't be expected to know that.

We: He could have called us! How can you just sit there and not want to do anything about this?

So it went. Ourselves, of course, kept the matter in perspective and maintained a cool outlook, finally deciding the issue wasn't worth throwing ourselves into a tizzy and having to buy another bottle of Maalox.

Rebecca Brite

cynic's corner



'Not to decide is to decide' signifies denial of freedom

By Bruce Nelson

A chance meeting with an acquaintance recently exposed me to an arresting and perturbing idea.

After the usual exchanges concerning the weather, I found myself sitting in his apartment. I was glancing alternately at the moisture forming on my glass of cola and at a poster bearing the words "Not to decide is to decide."

Unfortunately I asked what it meant, and my friend excitedly explained to me that God had presented mankind with a choice—either to accept His Son, Jesus Christ, or to reject him.

Christ was God's gift to man and as with all gifts you have only two alternatives, either accept or reject it. Not to decide necessarily implies rejection.

Hearing this, my mind's eye began to perceive the afternoon dissolving into hours of futile discussion like the ice melting in my empty glass. After two years of Bible college and the curse of being a minister's son, one feels acutely the futility of religious discussion.

Nevertheless, I filled my lungs with air and my glass with cola, and crossing my legs I said, "Well, assuming that God exists, which I don't, and assuming that he is not imaginative enough to save mankind except by the brutal murder of his own Son, I grant that you have no other choice, but acceptance or rejection of Christ."

Before my friend could begin his protests over my agnosticism, I quickly added that I would even agree that indecision implied rejection under the circumstances, although I found it to be a denial of man's freedom and totally unjust.

It took a few minutes—at least one of my legs had fallen asleep—before my friend's protests died down and he asked why I thought the expression "Not to decide is to decide" was unjust.

I reflected a moment. Then I said, "Suppose you were one of those caught up in Stalin's purges. Suppose further that Old Joe called you into his office and said, 'Friend, I am giving you a great and wonderful choice. You can

either totally and slavishly accept my ideology and policies and serve me or you can reject me and spend eternity in a concentration camp.'

Stalin pauses then says, "But of course, it's your free choice. You're a man with free will, and I want you to make this decision freely."

Then, his voice turning colder, he continues, "But remember two things. One: it's not me that's sending you to the concentration camp, but your own free decision. Two: not to decide, of course, is to decide."

The air seemed suddenly very heavy, and I decided it was past time to leave. Avoiding my friend's stare as I walked out, I noticed the water ring my glass had left on the table.

It was still hot outside, but for some reason I felt a sense of cool relief. Walking toward campus, I noticed the traffic had thinned. Some guys were playing catch with a football, and somewhere a stereo was playing.

Stopping at a crosswalk, I mused to myself, "What a poor analogy, Stalin and God, but then again..."

The light turned green. Stepping off the curb, I thought that my friend wasn't the only one who wanted all things boiled down to a simple yes or no.

Surely Hamlet was right when he told Horatio, "There are more things in heaven and earth... Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Why is it we all must have simple answers, simple solutions to complex problems? Must everything be either/or? Why can't we admit some questions are perhaps unanswerable or answerable in several ways, or that solutions cannot be totally satisfactory?

After a critical examination, why isn't "I don't know" a satisfactory answer: But no, men must force solutions—the simpler the better—so "Not to decide is to decide."

Cynic's Quote of the Week: "The man who says to me, 'Believe as I do or God will damn you,' will presently say to me, 'Believe as I do or I will kill you.'" —Voltaire.

innocent bystander



Israelis joyous; Sadat knuckles under

By Arthur Hoppe

The joy of the Israelis over the signing of the Sinai pact with Egypt knows no bounds.

My friend Mordecai Shalom was dancing down Dizengoff St. in Tel Aviv when he ran into old Isaac Bendove.

"Great news, Isaac," cried Mordecai. "Henry Kissinger has forced Sadat to knuckle under and accept a couple of thousand square miles of the Sinai including a quarter of

our oil wells and the two unassailable passes we held."

"That's good?" said Isaac.

"Good?" said Mordecai. "Do you realize that for 27 years Egypt has been in a state of war with us, threatening at any moment to drive us into the sea?"

"And now Egypt is at peace with us, Mordecai?"

"Well, no, Egypt is still at war with us. But Sadat has promised not to drive us into the sea for at least 36 months."

"What a bargain! But when we withdraw from those unassailable passes, Mordecai, who will defend us from the vast Egyptian army?"

"Never fear, Isaac. Henry has seen to that. He is going to send us 150 American civilians armed with pistols, if the American Congress approves this drastic step."

"The poor Egyptians must be shaking in their boots. Nothing between Cairo and 150 pistol-packing Americans but a couple of hundred thousand soldiers, tanks, missiles and MIGs. Tell me, Mordecai, how did Henry force them into this humiliating surrender?"

"Threats, Isaac. 'Sadat,' he said, 'Unless you accept the entire Sinai and southern Israel, I will have to resume selling the Israelis the Phantom jets I stopped selling them so that I could threaten you with resuming selling them.'"

"He is a hard man, that Henry."

"But Sadat proved a wily negotiator. In the end they compromised, and the Egyptians only had to take back the western Sinai."

"Well, even Henry is only human. But a man who can outsmart the Arabs..."

"Not all of them, Isaac. He still has to negotiate with the Syrians and Jordanians, who are even tougher. But have faith. In our behalf, he'll force them to knuckle under, too."

"Wonderful, Mordecai. Of course, I'll mill Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. But why does he do this for us?"

"Didn't you know, Mordecai? He's Jewish."

"Jewish! God forbid the Arabs should find out. They'll tear up the pact!"

"Calm yourself, Isaac. After all, if we can't trust the Arabs, whom can we trust?"

"Henry?"

"Exactly. As our friend, Kishon, said, 'Deep down in his heart, we know that Henry has his fingers crossed for us.'"

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