

editorial

Stop-off theory idealizes mediocrity

Nearly a month has passed since James Zumberge startled the university community and the entire state by announcing his resignation as UNL chancellor.

That the shock waves still are being felt is evidenced in the Sunday Journal and Star column, "Nebraska's Fourth Estate," which reports on Norfolk Daily News and Omaha World-Herald editorials addressed to the question of whether the Legislature or the Board of Regents governs NU—a question Zumberge stressed in his resignation.

It is vital that this and other problems dramatized by Zumberge's departure continue to be examined, for the future of the NU system depends on resolving these issues.

Gov. J. James Exon, reacting to the loss of Zumberge, has told the Daily Nebraskan he believes it is to NU's credit that so many top educators and administrators have seen fit to stop at Nebraska on their way to educational pinnacles.

According to Exon, NU should be proud that such officials as Zumberge, Duane Acker, Virginia Trotter, Melvin George and others have thought enough of NU to use it as a steppingstone to more prestigious positions.

What a self-serving and evasive defense of an indefensible situation are those statements!

No one connected with this institution, no resident of this state should be satisfied with a "steppingstone" university, an educational middle-ground. To do so is to idealize mediocrity and give up hope of achieving quality.

Instead of being proud that good educators use NU as one rung on their climbs to success, we should be asking why Nebraska is not the top of

the ladder.

Our goal should not be, as Exon put it, to remain "competitive within the Big 8 schools," but to be the highest of those universities in all things.

How we might reach that goal is a question that cannot even be approached until both the Board of Regents and the Legislature decide they are willing to give up the security of being average.

(Don't miss Wednesday's editorial, wherein we will sing our version of "Money Makes the World Go 'Round," featuring that famous juggling act,

"J.J. and the '49ers.") ***

A giant step: The mayor of Austin, Tex., Jeff Friedman, Friday inaugurated a program under which persons caught possessing four ounces or less of marijuana will be ticketed rather than jailed.

The move is especially brave in the light of Texas's harsh state laws against possession, which prescribe a two-year to life penalty on first offense. **Rebecca Brite**

innocent bystander

Milton one step behind each disaster

By Arthur Hoppe

My friend Milton Haberdash, who used to be shunned by civilized society, is a happy man today.

Like any good citizen, Milton always worried about potential disasters facing the nation. Unfortunately, he always worried about them at the wrong time.

I first met Milton at a dinner party during the Berlin Crisis of 1961. "What I fear most," he told the others grimly, "is Communist subversion of our democratic institutions."

The guests were shocked, the hostess stunned. "Really, Milton," she said coldly, "no one has worried about Communist subversion for years. What we worry about today is nuclear annihilation." And she never invited him back.

Milton manfully boned up on the threat of nuclear annihilation, but by the time he was prepared to speak on the subject at cocktail parties, everybody was talking about the missile gap instead.

At a picnic in 1964, Milton came out strongly in favor of developing an anti-Chinese ballistic missile. As the other revelers were intently discussing civil rights in the South by then, he was, of course, totally ignored.

No sooner had he amassed facts on civil rights in the South than everyone was talking about race riots in the North, a subject quickly replaced by Vietnam—one jump, as

usual, ahead of Milton.

By 1971 Milton was ready to speak out in favor of withdrawing from Vietnam. But no one listened as they were too busy worrying about the generation gap, the sexual revolution and women's lib.

At a buffet supper just last week, Milton startled everyone present by suddenly shouting, "I think Nixon is too a crook!" The other guests yawned and turned away. He began to sob.

I drew him aside and told him frankly that his problem was that he worried about the wrong things.

"But aren't Communists, nuclear annihilation, missile gaps, civil rights violations, pollution, the energy crisis and corruption potential threats to our way of life?" he asked hopefully.

"Of course they are, Milton," I assured him. "But these days everybody's worried about the economy instead."

He sighed. "Okay. What should we do about it?"

"No one knows," I said truthfully.

He thought about this and then beamed. "Then," he cried triumphantly, "there's no sense worrying about it!"

Milton is still shunned by civilized society. But, as I say, he's a happy man today. He hasn't got a worry in the world.

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RALPH *Kitchener*



cynic's corner



Economic theories reminiscent of 1929

By Bruce Nelson

Neither you nor I, nor economists know the whys behind our economic woes, but the question of what has happened is a little easier to answer.

First there was an economic theory called capitalism, which said people had the right to make their living in a free market. Each person could own, buy or sell goods for his own liking and profit without government intervention.

Private property, private profit and maximum freedom were the main ingredients. It seemed like a good recipe.

But capitalism had a problem: alternating depression and inflation. Hence it wasn't stable and stability is a requisite for any economic model.

Capitalism's problems hit an all-time high with the Great Depression, when people began to wonder if there wasn't a better system.

Then a man named John Maynard Keynes (rhymes with "reigns") said he had found and solved the problem. Instability, it seemed, was inherent in capitalistic theory.

Classic capitalism had taught that stability would be maintained through the operation of Say's Law.

Say's Law said every cost of some produced good was someone's income. These two factors were equivalent, so when all incomes were spent they would be equal to the

cost of all produced goods.

But what if people saved instead of spent? The classical economists thought they had the answer to that, too.

They argued that savings were related to interest rates in that the higher the rates, the more people would save. The more people saved, the more business would have to invest.

Therefore, savings were actually spending in the form of investment.

This cycle theoretically guaranteed stability. The Great Depression seemed to prove it didn't.

Keynes argued that savings, interest and investment were not necessarily related. Saving, he said, was primarily a function of income. The higher the income, the more saved.

He also said investment was a function of profit expectations. No matter how much money was saved or how low the interest rates on loans, no businessman is going to invest if he can't make a profit.

This would explain why classical capitalism wasn't stable. What is worse, added Keynes, is that the economy is like an elevator, able to stop or stabilize at any position.

An equilibrium could be reached where farmers were killing cattle while people were starving in the cities, which happened in the '30s.

The answer, Keynes said, was for government to step in, stimulate the economy and balance it at a higher level.

Between 1936 (when Keynes's book was published) and 1965, almost everyone embraced Keynesian economics. The only exceptions were conservative diehards in love with laissez-faire capitalism and Marxists, who believed Keynesian theory to be only a bandage on the dying American economy.

Both groups were rather subdued, however, since the Keynesians were doing so well. Indeed, in the early '60s, it seemed economics would become an exact science after all.

In 1966, the economy, to the distress of the Keynesians, inexplicably began falling apart. But because of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, it was to be several years before the general public would be aware of it.

This brings us to the present. The conservatives and Marxists now are saying gleefully that their theories were right all along.

A recent National Review article pointed out that a few years ago it was said, "We are all Keynesians." Now it is being said that no one is a Keynesian.

While that isn't completely true, it does seem that in terms of economic theory, we are back in 1929.