

guest opinion

Faculty union might do harm

By Chip Lowe

To tell you the truth, I didn't even know what AAUP meant. But I do now. It stands for the American Association of University Professors—and if it is adopted by the faculty next Monday, it means unionization will have come to UNL.

Prof. Dermot Coyne says it's a "professional organization."

Prof. Roy Arnold feels that student input into the agreements is a "big unknown."

The editor of the Daily Nebraskan says it's time to get on the bandwagon.

James McKay, a professor at Oakland University, where AAUP reigns supreme, says he has "changed his stripes" in favor of faculty unionization.

I say that 20,000 students are being taken for a ride and don't know it.

I called Oakland University in Rochester, Mich., where AAUP is the union for faculty members. I talked to Don Fuller, president of the Student Congress at Oakland. He told me that tuition had increased from \$17.50 a credit hour to \$22.50 a credit hour in the three years since Oakland has had the AAUP union. Moreover, he said, they are facing a possible \$5 increase next fall. Last fall their AAUP and administration representatives were deadlocked over contract negotiations that were not resolved until one day before classes began.

Vince Boucher, editor of the D.N., has indicated he feels that faculty unionization possibly will increase the quality of education. I like that idea; and I'd be willing to pay for increased quality.

I asked Mr. Fuller what impact AAUP had on Oakland's quality. "Our quality is declining," he said. "We are losing professors, not keeping them."

"The State Legislature at Lansing has not appropriated enough money to cover the increase in faculty salaries. The administration has been forced to raise tuition and cut programs. But, since they can't fire individual professors, their only recourse is to wipe out entire departments. The last one to go was Classics—before that it was the Academy of Dramatic Arts."

What about Boucher's hopes for a student voice in the

decisions of salaries, work loads and advising? At Oakland they have zero. And a report issued by the Academic Collective Bargaining Information Service indicates that across the nation the student voice in the negotiations is slim or none. Nowhere do students have a vote in the matter.

Probably it is wrong to generalize too much from the experience of one faculty union at Oakland. As far as Don Fuller was concerned, it surely did lead to increased faculty salaries. But the irony is that "students have to pay more while they get less."

From the viewpoint of the student, the bandwagon should stop.

Chip Lowe is a senior majoring in political science. He is a student member of the Council on Student Life.

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The Earth Shoe disciples— is mortal 'sole' in danger?

By Neil Klotz

In the beginning there were no flat places. Primeval men and women padded around in bare feet in the soft earth, their heels sinking into the ground as they walked. No one knows what happened when the ground froze.

Thus beginneth the gospel of the negative heel shoe, as espoused by Anne Kalso, the originator of "Earth Shoes." Cloistered in the "yoga monastery" in Santos, Brazil, Kalso examined the sunken-heel footprints of Brazilian Indians in the sand. Taking the local natives as an example of unspoiled humanity, she concluded that we were meant to walk with the heel lower than the rest of the foot and our weight back, in a rolling motion.

Instead, we pound around in flat shoes on flat pavement all day, and our feet and spines take a constant beating. The idea became leather. A shoe was born. And, as with all true religions, imitators followed—about 85 at last count.

Since they first appeared in the United States in 1970, Earth Shoes have been the center of a storm of controversy. From all accounts they will either cripple millions or bring the Second Coming.

Curse or cure?

"Unheeled Shoe Heals Bad Posture," "Earth Shoes: The Walk to Better Health," "Earth Shoes: A Cosmic Home for Your Feet," blare some recent articles by college newspaper reporters who seem intent upon rewriting Earth Shoe PR one degree better.

"This shoe will cripple everyone who wears it," says a body movement and posture instructor in equally strident tones quoted in the New York Times. And doctors—everyone seems to have found a podiatrist to support his own point of view.

Where does the truth lie, or in this case, stand? Perhaps we won't know for another generation, when everyone wearing Earth Shoes either keels over with paraplegia at 50 or hikes on to a ripe 120. So with not all precincts reporting, here is what two studies conducted so far and my own research have found:

Room to Move: For those who can wear negative heel shoes the greatest benefit does not come from the negative heels, but from the fact that the shoes don't cramp your toes together. A bit mundane when compared to Brazilian Indians prowling the beaches on their heels.

According to a study last year by the California Podiatric Medical Center, Earth Shoes have a wide space for your toes which will relieve the symptoms of five common foot problems—all various types of corns, bunions and callouses. This study was quick to note that the shoes do not cure or correct anything, they only make the foot with these problems feel better.

The same finding was confirmed by a joint investigation of the California Public Interest Research Group (CLPIRG) and the UCLA Peer Health Counselors, which concluded that the shoes represented a "good trend away from platform, high-heeled or pointy toe shoes." But that was where the kudos ended.

Shattering the myth

The Myth of Negativity. What, then, do negative heels contribute? For between one-third and one-fourth of the population, they contribute constant pain, said both California studies. Those with very flat feet, very high arches or shortened calf muscles will never be able to adjust to the negative heels.

The shoes likely will cause foot ulcers in diabetics, said the medical center study—strong stuff from them

since Kalso helped finance the study. Anti-Earth Shoe doctors claim that the shoes will aggravate back and foot problems in anyone suffering from obesity, strokes, arthritis, slipped discs or other chronic spinal problems.

The pro-negative faction has less to work with. Anne Kalso seems to have assumed that since high heels are bad, negative heels must be great, but no one has said exactly why.

Negative heels throw your weight back and at least initially straighten your posture. But after the "break-in period" when the Achilles tendon in the back of the foot is stretched out, you can hunch over with the best of them.

What value derives from stretching the heel cord? "Toning the muscles cannot be bad," said one doctor, but he admitted that no lasting benefit will occur without exercising other foot, leg and back muscles.

An arch-enemy?

The Arch of Triumph (and Defeat). The same criticism goes for the shoes' built-up arch. A good arch support fitted to your foot will help your weight shift properly from heel along the outside of the foot across the mid-foot to the toe. But if you were walking badly before, an arch support won't change your bad posture without corrective exercises.

If you already walk properly, Earth Shoes probably will continue to let you do so. But so will other low or no-heel shoes with good arches or even customized arch support insets at about one-third the price.

Ironically, some negative heel shoes won't deliver good support for your \$40 to \$60. Earth and Nature Shoes have good arches, but Roots are almost flat. "There's no break in time," cheered the saleswoman in the store I visited—that is, there is almost no difference between Roots and regular shoes, aside from the doubled price.

The Path of No Return. Once you plunk down your bucks, you're stuck with most negative shoe heels, whether you wear them or not.

Two weeks to adjust

Kalso's Earth Shoes still sell by mail order, an indefensible sales tactic considering the damage the shoes could do to those who shouldn't be wearing them for any reason.

In addition, while it takes most people two weeks to adjust to the shoes, most stores selling Earth Shoes have only a ten-day trial period. Some stores will let you return the shoes as long as they are not dirty, that is, worn only on the carpet where you can't tell if they're working anyway (soft surface, remember?).

Do not even consider negative heel shoes if any of those things plagues you. After that, it is up to you. No one can say how our ancestors walked—or even ran—so the "more natural" claim of the shoes does not hold up.

In many cases the same corporations which offer "natural" products on one hand, devastate the environment with the other. As the air becomes more polluted and the city noisier, two big sellers I see for the future are an Organic Oxygen Inhaler (with herbal aromas) and Natural Noises Headphones to drown out the hubbub with chirping birds and such.

Covered with smog in the New York Harbor, the Statue of Liberty will blink on and off with a new neon welcome: "Give us your poor, you poisoned and hunched-over citizens. We'll tell them: take two Earth Shoes and go to bed."

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letters to the editor

I was disappointed to read the Wednesday Daily Nebraskan front-page story about the "Fiery Monday" vandalism on 16th St. The story goes into great detail about certain aspects of the incident early Tuesday morning, but failed to touch on some of the central facts.

The reporter relied too much on the police side of the story and hardly at all on first-hand observation, if there was a Rag reporter there at all.

The incident began as a streak-in and water fight by several members of the Kappa Sigma fraternity, and was aimed, it seemed, at the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority—a spring courtship ritual, more or less. The other nearby fraternities turned out to join the affair, which in certain aspects was highly organized and originally quite harmless. A number of people from Neihardt Residence Center joined as spectators.

It turned ugly slowly. Firecrackers and flaming toilet paper draped from power lines foreshadowed the pyromania to follow. A car spewing water on the crowd with a fire extinguisher passed by several times, eventually prompting a few celebrants to blockade the streets. Others courteously guided trapped motorists back to an escape route. After the crowd shifted its attention away from the barricade, a few dorm students dismantled enough of it to open a lane for traffic.

But by then, a piano had been hauled into the street from either the Sigma Nu or Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. The football table came from either Sigma Nu or Sigma Phi Epsilon.

The Rag could have easily checked where these "sacrificed" articles came from. The phrase, "from one of the living units on 16th St.," implicates any of the other Greek houses or the residence hall on that street which may have had no more involvement in the affair than watching the blaze or trying to sleep or study through the racket. The story obviously tried to avoid mentioning the obvious involvement of the first few frat houses that sparked the incident.

The tone of the story was perhaps too factual to be accurate.

"Between 200 and 300 students" did not stop traffic. As few as 20 or 30 did—probably the same small group that started the fire and piled on the two "sacrifices." The rest were spectators, and not all condoned what they were watching.

This is the type of incident that will reflect badly upon the entire university community of 20,000. No doubt it could be used to rationalize the rejection of the alcohol legalization proposal at Saturday's NU Board of Regents meeting. The inane performance of a handful of playful vandals, destroying mostly their own property, will be cited as immaturity on the part of the rest of us.

We can only hope the Rag hasn't provided enough fuel to burn the alcohol and guest-hour proposals.

Ray Walden

ralph by ron wheeler

