

ralph by ron wheeler



letters to the editor

I am absolutely appalled by the article in the Daily Nebraskan (Feb. 23) informing people about the food stamp program. Food stamps are not a right. Food stamps are a privilege extended to the "needy" by the government. No one has an inalienable right to food stamps, so I do not understand the "publicity campaign" to put more people on the taxpayers account. Some students are taxpayers too, and many students who do not deserve food stamps are getting them by sliding around flimsy rules. This garbage must stop. A decent day's work (students included) would go a long way toward getting the country off its pampering attitude. We don't need any more cheats on welfare than is absolutely essential. Some

con/
pro

'Things that go bump in the night'

By Neil Klotz

In a darkened laboratory, the mad scientists huddle over their creation. The monster had begun as a child. Then they threw in some arms and legs and some limited constitutional rights. Finally he was given a brain—the ability to make choices. As the juice was turned on and the ozone filled the air, the monster arose from the table and thundered, "When will I get my money's worth from this college?" The student-as-consumer was born.

Students pay for educational goods and services with two to four years of their time and energy and often several thousand dollars in tuition. Shouldn't they be protected from fraud and violations of their rights like other consumers?

So the great student-as-consumer debate goes. Perhaps no discussion in higher education has produced more unnecessary confusion and fright as this one. Some critics have conjured the image of a student-consumer Frankenstein staggering madly down the aisle of the educational marketplace, tipping over those sacred potted concepts like "the community of scholars," "faculty collegiality" and "institutional individuality." Alas, we shall all be reduced to crass merchandizing, they say.

Root rot

For one thing, those hallowed growths of higher education began to develop root rot long before the student-as-consumer came along.

For another, the concept of students-as-consumers is only a concept, nothing more. It's another way of discussing student rights, just as the concept of college students as children is a way of not discussing them. Just because students are more than consumers does not mean we can't use the model to see how they use their energy and money.

For a closer look at the alleged monster, we can examine three major forces caught in the act of creating him.

1. The growth of student legal rights. Students literally began as children in the eyes of the law. Until the 1960s, college administrators legally acted as students' parents (in loco parentis), and could suspend, expel, censor, and otherwise abridge students' constitutional rights. The courts kept hands off, even though father was laying into the kid behind the ivory tower. But that began to change. From 1969 to 1975 the U.S. Supreme Court began to see public school students as American citizens. After almost 200 years, they were given the First Amendment rights to free speech, press and assembly; Fourth Amendment rights to freedom from illegal search and seizure, and 14th Amendment rights to the limited due

Court implies appointees not puppets

The decision of Student Court to rule against the ASUN Senate's attempt to rescind CSL student appointees was a pat on the back for hard working student representatives.

As has been pointed out in this space before, student appointees should be free to represent the students—as they perceive the student needs and desires and with their own intelligence.

They should not be dictated to by the student government, the ASUN Senate, when vague ideological differences occur between ASUN senators and the appointees.

It has been observed that many student appointees demonstrate more seriousness and continuity than many student senators who rise to make a fuss one month and resign the next.

ASUN Senate is an appointive mechanism as it relates to students who serve on campus committees and governing boards. It has no right to demand that appointees be its puppets.

The court is to be commended for realizing this fact and emphasizing that specific cause is needed to insist that an appointment be terminated.

Ultimately the court must have decided that the wholesale removal, (or recall or rescission or

whatever other semantic game will be used to describe the action) was not fair to either the student appointees or the students they represent.

Whatever comments are leveled against the UNL student government, it is certainly more in touch with the student body than the University of Wisconsin Student Association (WSA).

The WSA pledged to contribute \$2,000 to the defense of David Fine, who allegedly participated in the 1970 bombing of the Army Research Center in Madison. One student died in that explosion.

A group of students who oppose the move have called for a campus referendum on the issue, saying they represent the majority of students who are opposed to the defense fund.

Furthermore, the student newspaper, The Daily Cardinal, hit a snag when their publication board vetoed a \$5,000 contribution to Fine's defense.

The radical fires apparently still burn in some quarters, however narrow they may be.

Vince Boucher

people need assistance; not everyone is entitled to a free handout from Uncle Sam.

Joseph Saame

Title IX deflowers Innocents

I think Title IX is ridiculous if it also pertains to organizations like the Innocents. Who is the government to tell the Innocents who to admit? And who in the Innocents is squeamish enough to comply with such a ridiculous piece of legislation.

If the Innocents do not particularly wish to have female companionship, then it should not be forced on them. The Ladies have Mortar Board. We gave women the vote, now they want our innocence. What is this world going to do next?

Victor Kelly

d.n.
soapbox

process for informal hearings before they can be suspended or expelled.

During the same time, the 26th Amendment gave 18-year-olds the right to vote and laid the student-as-child to rest forever. Meanwhile the college administrator has been dethroned from his position as almighty father to a less exalted one as restricted tyrant.

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The inevitable expansion of student rights puts administrators on the same level with students: orders don't come from above; they are negotiated in a contract. In the past year, several students have filed suits against their schools to establish the college catalog as a legally binding contract. Their educational contracts were breached, they claim, when courses and degree requirements changed arbitrarily or when promised instruction was not delivered.

2. Government regulation of financial aid programs. With student loan defaults on the rise, the feds looked for a better way to stem the tide than sending enforcers traipsing after bankrupt students. The U.S. Office of Education (OE) found that many students defaulted because terms of their loans were never explained or because their school folded before the term ended.

Private correspondence and trade schools were tapped as major culprits, initiating open warfare that has not ended yet. Last year both OE and the Federal Trade Commission issued regulations that required schools to disclose more and better information to prospective students and to set up fair and equitable refund policies.

Since these regulations only vaguely described what schools had to do, another branch of the student-consumer tree sprouted: the "better information" gang. Under a federal grant, 11 institutions are developing "model prospectuses" that would present everything students should know about a school before enrolling.

Even while holding the banner of student consumerism,

the government's hands are not completely clean. Some officials are less interested in protecting against fraud than they are in using the consumer model to protect the Ford administration's "free market" theory of token outlays for financial aid. It's like this: let tuition increase to meet higher costs. It's a free market, so let those consumers who can afford it foot the bill. All others can stay home.

3. General consumer unrest. The 1930s' labor revolts saw workers win the right to collectively bargain for better salaries and conditions with management. But they soon discovered what they won at the bargaining table they lost at the cash register. Corporate fraud and price-fixing, inferior and unsafe merchandise, polluted food and drugs, and monopolistic credit prices jelled the concept of the endangered consumer in the public's mind.

In addition, as the economy sputters but refuses to kick over and unemployment hovers around 8 per cent, more people have had less to do with the well-advertised "good life." Besides the hard-core poor, we now have the *nouveau* poor, a consumer block beginning to question the forces that have made them what they are today.

Prime candidates

As part of the future economic structure, students are prime candidates for the new poor. Unless they major in multi-national corporate economics or intelligence gathering, students find that the B.A. they invested in has been devalued in the job market.

Like the fear that passes through a line of cattle about to be slaughtered, trepidation over the awaiting ax has moved students to assert their rights as consumers. Faculty members have asserted their rights as workers in collective bargaining.

In this uneasy atmosphere, students could provoke a change for the better, or they could wait passively for stockbrokers to start jumping out of windows again. If student consumerism is to be effective, it must go beyond a demand for better information about available educational choices and about which choice is the "best buy."

The real question is: who decides what choices will be offered in the first place? Student consumer protection should strike in the backrooms of the educational market, where until now government and business have made all the orders. It's time to turn the supermarket into a co-op, where student consumers have an equal voice in determining where their time, energy and skills are used. Formulating new purposes will not be easy, but it's the only way out.

If student consumers linger to count pennies while the store burns, they'll only add to the number of monsters already on the bone pile.