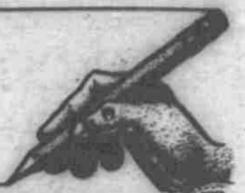


opinion



Nebraskans should vote for amendment six

A summer U.S. Supreme Court decision should help clear the way for the addition of proposed amendment six (part one) to Nebraska's Constitution.

The amendment would allow private schools to be reimbursed for money spent to educate handicapped children.

The Supreme Court in June sanctioned a broader form of aid to private schools. It held that a Maryland law granting aid to private schools for non-sectarian purposes was constitutional as long as the law has a secular legislative purpose and the primary effect of the law is not to advance or inhibit religion.

Nebraska's proposed amendment would violate neither of these stipulations. The amendment would make workable a 1973 law (LB403) which mandated school districts in Nebraska to offer special education programs for handicapped children. To provide this education, the schools can contract with other school districts or offices of mental retardation. The state then will reimburse, according to the law, ninety per cent of the excess costs the schools incur by providing these special education programs.

The amendment will alter the state Constitution to allow private schools to be reimbursed for the amount spent to educate the handicapped children.

With these stipulations attached, this amendment would violate none of the many good reasons for not providing financial aid to sectarian schools.

In enacting LB403, the Legislature intended that all children in the state, regardless of their mental or physical abilities, should have a good education. Not to provide reimbursement for handicapped children attending private schools would be to deny these children something the state has long held a fundamental right.

Rather than breaching the U.S. Constitution's prohibition against combining church and state, this amendment would assure each student gets the education due him.

Applicable here are Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun's words on the Maryland case. "Religious institutions need not be quarantined from public benefits available to all."

Advice on homecoming

This letter relates to an editorial purported to be a news item on the front page of the Oct. 14 *Daily Nebraskan*. Feeling that the Alpha Tau Omega (ATO) fraternity was done a disservice in your newspaper we would like to reply.

On ATO's homecoming display last year, most of our materials were donated by the alumni, which is legal according to the "rules". Secondly, no one ever asked us or any house how much they spent.

The people who cited figures on our display didn't even assume that they were trying to disfavor Alpha Tau Omega with the judging committee.

Apparently your paper feels the purpose of the displays is to win a prize after judging. We must disagree! We feel that a project of this nature is designed to draw the members of the house together, provide entertainment for those Lincolmites who make the special trip to campus to see the projects and to boost the homecoming spirit on campus—something your paper might try for a change.

In closing, we noticed that after our winning display last year, several houses followed suit with larger displays this year. That was our intent—to get homecoming back into prominence! We have certainly accomplished that! Case closed!

The Men of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity,
Gamma Theta Chapter.

Show 'em they're wrong

I have been observing with increased interest the controversy surrounding KFMQ and I am hereby setting forth

the proposition that, contrary to the opinion of KFMQ's management, KFMQ is not "the only game in town."

I rarely listen to KFMQ, mainly because I enjoy listening to good music too much. When I do listen to radio, KQ98 from Council Bluffs is definitely the best in FM rock, at least around here.

My musical taste runs a wide gamut, but it does not include regurgitated Top 40 pop masquerading as "progressive rock." I have absolutely zero need for any FM station which is still stumbling around in the Great American AM Ozone.

The best advice to the real music-lovers stalking the angry streets of this football-fetished town in refuge from KFMQ plus (horror-of-horror!) that Great American Turn-Off, KLMS, is this: Good stereo equipment, especially if you have an antenna "aimed" toward the Omaha-Council Bluffs area, should give decent reception of KQ98, next to 98 on the FM dial (a bit to the right on my Kenwood.)

Quality reception cannot be guaranteed, especially if you live in a bad area in terms of interference from other, less-desirable broadcasting sources. I never listen to anything else but KQ98 for FM rock. KFMQ is still good for keeping in touch with the AM scene, though.

If you don't have the resources to break out from under the KFMQ tyranny, write the folks there and tell them how you feel about all this. They actually believe that their audience is somewhat stupid—obvious by the level of music they play. They also believe that they have a captive market in Lincoln for "progressive" FM music. How about showing them they are wrong?

Dewey Carter

Orion



by STEWART



'Schlock outfit' challenging power of big networks

By Nicholas Von Hoffman

When the government raised the antitrust question vis-a-vis the television networks during the Nixon years, there was so much feeling the motive was political that the Federal Communications Commission couldn't pursue the matter.

Now it has been raised again by the Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. which is saying, "The networks dominate the television industry. They exercise effective control over most of the time on affiliated stations; they influence over-all advertising rates and practices; they

sidewise

absorb a disproportionate share of revenue and profits, and they work a major impact on economic conditions in the industry. The total effect of the action and practices is inconsistent with the spirit of the antitrust laws."

With five major market TV stations (Philadelphia, Boston, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Baltimore), Westinghouse is perhaps the most important of the non-network owned chains.

Schlock outfit

The company has a reputation in the industry as a schlock outfit of no distinction, so that its complaints against the networks—one or another of its stations are affiliated with all three of them—don't arise out of anguish over the poor quality of network goods, but only out of a healthy desire for profit. That doesn't make what Westinghouse is charging less valid, merely less heroic.

The Westinghouse complaint, recently lodged with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), explains why it is so difficult for a local station to keep crime and sex in some kind of reasonable limits.

The company says that local stations are given previews of the shows the networks are going to send them so soon before they are to be aired, a station manager doesn't have the time to find a substitute and promote it sufficiently to hope to get an audience.

The complaint also alleges that local stations are finding it more and more difficult to buy substitute material that isn't directly or indirectly controlled by the networks.

During the heyday of radio and through the 1950s, the networks in effect sold blocks of time to the advertising agencies which produced the shows, hired the stars and had responsibility for much that went on the air.

The complaints about this system were many and varied. The ad agencies cranked out an ineffable amount of dull junk which was at least less violent—old re-runs like Perry Mason. But credit may not belong with the agencies, only with the era which might not have tolerated the sort of programs routinely aired now.

The argument also can be made that, when the agencies instead of any three network offices controlled program production, the simple multiplicity of sources encouraged variety and the possibility of quality.

Whatever the reasons, drama and entertainment on TV 20 years ago was sometimes extraordinarily good.

Nothing new

Without buying the argument that letting the ad agencies control program content would improve it, there's no doubt that giving power to the three networks consolidates the dissemination of identical monochromatic material and reduces the possibility of local stations making any kind of unique or different contribution.

"The networks are trying to change local stations into mere extensions of the national network program pipeline," the Westinghouse petition to the FCC alleges. "Each year local affiliated stations have less involvement in and responsibility for the totality of the programming carried over their equipment to the public in their communities. If this is allowed to continue, local affiliated stations will ultimately perform functions little different from cable TV outlets."

The immediate shape of this quarrel concerns the probability that the networks will go to hour-long evening news programs soon. What Westinghouse fears is that the extra half-hour won't come out of prime time but out of the time now used by the local stations for their own news.

According to Westinghouse, such a change would increase network profits by \$75 million a year with a

corresponding loss to local stations. This, coupled with the revenues the networks get from the stations they themselves own, would give ABC, CBS and NBC over half the revenues of the entire industry to go along with their control of over two-thirds of the air time.

Three networks dangerous

Local station owners have been so bad, so cheap, so vulgarly reactionary they have made the networks look like the good guys. It's not easy to defend these characters, but no one ever claimed that the advantages and safeguards attached to diversified ownership and decentralized control are either obvious or instantly apparent.

Nevertheless, you don't even have to be as smart as Spiro Agnew to realize that, whether they're good guys or rotten eggs, having three networks and at most a few hundred people be the major purveyors of news and entertainment is inherently too dangerous.

Westinghouse wants the Congress and/or FCC to give local stations help in order to balance the power between them and the networks. This might protect Westinghouse's profits against network encroachment; it might also lower the level of police drama violence, but it wouldn't open up the industry much and it certainly wouldn't encourage that diversity of voices which the theory says a democracy ought to have.

There are many ways that could be done in this industry, where government power has been used to create the three network informational oligopoly.

Coin-operated TV?

Networks could be forbidden to own television stations; no station could be allowed to broadcast more than three hours of material a day from the same network thereby making the commerce base for two or three new competing networks; the present structure could be left intact but all the legal barriers to pay-TV, most of which have been fostered by outfits like Westinghouse working in cahoots with the networks, could be eliminated.

Now is the time to reduce and decentralize network power. We're in a lull, a quiet period. If it isn't done now, the next Agnew may do it in a manner we might not like, or the next Nixon, cognizant of the advantages of centralized broadcast control for extraconstitutional government, may just tell them what to say.

Copyright, 1976, by King Features Syndicate