

Simmons' letters informative? Savage disagrees

By Maxine Kubicek

Three state senators who regularly receive letters from NU Board of Regents Chairman Robert Simmons say the letters are a valuable source of information. But Omaha Sen. John Savage said Monday that he thought "sometimes Simmons' mouth works faster than his brain." Simmons, a Scottsbluff attorney writes letters to the



Photo by Kevin Higley

Omaha Sen. John Savage

eight senators from his regent's district after each regents meeting. In the December letter, Simmons said two other unnamed regents voted for Ronald Roskens as interim NU president because they thought the job would be a career-killer.

Simmons also wrote that while Roskens was chancellor of the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), he violated a university directive against lobbying in the Nebraska Legislature.

In letters sent out during the past four months, Simmons also reportedly criticized NU administrators for having outside interests. Several administrators serve on the boards of directors of some banks.

Savage said he thought that Simmons "seemed to be against Omaha."

'Silly comments'

"Some of the silly comments he's made would make his illustrious father turn over in his grave," Savage said. Simmons' father, Robert Simmons, was chief justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court. He was on the court from 1939 to 1963.

Savage said he thought Simmons is trying to politically dominate the western part of the state.

"I don't know if he's planning to run for governor or what," Savage said, "but I oppose everything he's suggested. I would support any sensible ideas Simmons may have."

Savage, a member of the Appropriations Committee, said Simmons' criticism of some university projects would

not affect Savage's judgment of NU budget requests.

Waverly Sen. Jerome Warner, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said he thought the letters were an additional source of information in evaluating the actions and that "it would be helpful if all the regents had a similar approach."

"From what I've known of Simmons in the past, he's outspoken about his views," Warner said.

He said he doubted whether the letters would affect the decisions of the Appropriations Committee.

"I wouldn't be affected."

"There are a great many ways every legislator is contacted, both pro and con, as far as the university is concerned," he said. "Speaking for myself, I wouldn't be affected and I don't think anyone else would."

Most of the letters were not directly related to the NU budget, Warner said.

Senators Robert Clark of Sidney, William Nichol of Scottsbluff and Jack Mills of Big Springs agreed that Simmons' letters were informative about regents meetings. The three are from Simmons' regent's district.

Clark said Simmons' letters provided him with "the only way we have of knowing what is going on."

"I think Simmons is doing a fine job and I appreciate receiving his letters," Clark said. "He has enough nerve to

put what he thinks down on paper, which is something a lot of people don't have, although I'm not talking about the other regents."

'Source of insight'

Nichol said he hopes Simmons continues to send the letters because the senator keeps and refers to the letters during the legislative session. The letters are a source of insight not found in the news media, he said.

"Simmons isn't a rabble-rouser," Nichol said. "Even if something isn't the popular thing to say, if it's the truth, he'll say it."

Nichol said he didn't think the Appropriations Committee would be affected by the opinions expressed in the letters or that the budgets of either UNL or UNO would suffer as a result of the letters.

Mills said he thought the letters were written more to inform the senators of the regents' ideas than to influence the senators.

"The letters have helped me to become familiar with the regents and their ideas and I appreciate Simmons' efforts," Mills said.

"He may not always be in the majority, but the minority opinion is important also. Simmons is trying to do his job as a regent to inform those within his regent's district."

daily nebraskan

january 26, 1977 vol. 100 no. 64 lincoln, neb.



Photo by Scott Svoboda

Who are these people looking for? For the answer and more pictures turn to p. 11.

Increase possible for student fees

Another student fee increase, in addition to the \$3.50 increase approved in November by the NU Board of Regents, is possible for next year, Ron Gierhan, vice chancellor for student affairs said Tuesday.

Gierhan said he will not know until Feb. 15 if the increase is necessary, but "preliminary indications are that student fees will have to go up next semester."

He said he could not estimate how much the fees could increase.

Gierhan said he will ask officials from the Nebraska Union, University Health Center, and the Student Development office to reassess their programs for next year.

"We want to find out what it will cost to offer the students the same level of services as this year," Gierhan said.

The proposed additional increase from the current \$63-a-semester fee is because of a 5.5 per cent increase in salaries and a five per cent increase in operating costs, Gierhan said.

The \$3.50 increase already approved by the regents was to pay for bonds issued for the construction of the East Campus Union.

Gierhan said the proposed increase also will depend on the number of hours part-time students register for next semester. Part-time students taking seven hours or more pay student fees and are eligible for services full-time students have.

"If a number of students taking seven hours this semester suddenly drop down (and take) four or five hours next semester, student fees may have to go up," Gierhan said.

But, he said it would take a significant drop in credit hours taken by part-time students to further increase the fees.

Carter talk won't cool UNL efforts

Don't worry about wearing a second sweater at UNL this winter in light of President Jimmy Carter's suggestion to set thermostats at 65 degrees.

UNL's target has been 67 degrees, said Ray Coffey, assistant business manager.

UNL's efforts to conserve energy began about three years ago, when the energy crisis first became a public concern, Coffey said.

"We've had to analyze each buildings' heating system," he said, "and we have everything from old steam radiators to the latest systems designed with minimal fuel consumption in mind."

Coffey said considering the heat load of a room (the amount of people, equipment and lights), the fresh air intake, and whether the room has exterior or interior walls, it often saves energy and money to keep a room a few degrees warmer.

Coffey said Nebraska's recent shortage of fuel oil no. 1 and 2 did not affect UNL. He said the university has always run on natural gas, but it does have an alternate supply called fuel no. 6.

In case of a shortage, the natural gas is saved for residential areas and UNL relies on its alternate supply. On October 15, Coffey said, UNL was switched to fuel no. 6, and has been using it ever since.

"We have not had a serious problem with no. 6 fuel," he said, "but the price has gone up because the supplier was holding back."

Some other measures have been taken to save energy, according to Richard Fleming, assistant to the chancellor and director of University Information.

Fleming said two or three years ago monitoring systems were installed to keep fans and equipment off when not in use.

Last summer UNL offices changed their working hours to 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. so air conditioning units could be shut off one hour earlier in the afternoon.

Signs have been posted asking people to turn off lights, and energy conservation has been advocated in campus publications, Fleming said.

Although UNL will continue its energy-saving measures, there have been no new plans for conservation since Carter's recommendation.

"I would be hopeful that his (Carter's) appeal for energy conservation helps people realize that UNL is doing its best," Coffey said, "but we need the cooperation of faculty and students."

wednesday

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