

Classroom smokers create maintenance problem

By John Minnick

Cigarette smoking in UNL classrooms is increasing maintenance costs, but it is up to faculty members to enforce "No Smoking" regulations, according to Ed Simpson, director of UNL's Environmental Health and Safety Dept.

He said cigarette smoking in classrooms creates extra work for custodians.

"Students leave their cigarette butts on the floor and unknowingly burn the floor tiles. We simply don't want smoking in the classroom," he said.

Harley Schrader, UNL Physical Plant director, said cigarette butts destroy floor wax, burn furniture and make it difficult to clean classrooms.

Don Puckett, a UNL custodian said cigarettes are a problem for him.

"It's especially bad if the butts are ground into the

floor," Puckett said, "but I don't see any way you can enforce the rule.

"It should be up to the professor, but if he smokes in the room, how can he tell students not to smoke?"

Simpson said even though signs are posted in the classrooms, the responsibility to prohibit smoking is up to the instructor.

"We have had some complaints from students," Simpson said. "This is the only way we have any idea if a problem exists."

Robert Spence, associate professor of Art History, said he sets his own smoking policies. If the class is in a large lecture hall, he does not allow smoking, but he allows it in small seminars.

Set policies

"I set my policies at the beginning of the year and politely ask students to follow them," Spence said. "Professors should be able to manage their own classrooms and set their own rules."

Spence said he was aware of the regulations against smoking in classrooms, but said he has seen most of the "No Smoking" signs ripped down and now most rooms have ashtrays in them.

"I think the ashtrays show the university's concession to defeat to the smokers," Spence said.

Jim Schonewise, a freshman from Beatrice, said professors should exercise control over smoking in their rooms and he said he thinks smaller classrooms are terrible to be in if people are smoking.

"The students usually obey the instructor's wishes on smoking," he said. "Smoking bothers me. I will ask someone to put out their cigarette if it is bothering me."

Exercise control

Mike Peterson, a freshman from Minden, said he agrees that teachers should exercise control over smoking in their smaller classes. Mike smokes in his large classes, even though there are "No Smoking" signs in the classrooms.

"I usually smoke right before the class starts, and put it out when the lecture begins," Peterson said. "A lot of

people smoke right along with me. If someone doesn't like it, they can move."

Lincoln Sen. Shirley Marsh, who sponsored a bill in the 1976 Legislature that banned smoking in public places, said she believes campuses should take action to prohibit smoking in the classroom.

Marsh takes a night class at the university twice a week and said the class agreed to prohibit smoking in the classroom.

"We are in a small room and those who do want to smoke now leave the room," she said. "It was tough to get people to agree to it at first."

Awareness raised

Marsh said her bill has helped to raise awareness of how offensive smoking is to the general public.

Don Rixstine, deputy state fire marshal, said the smoking policy is up to the university. He said he did not think the university enforced it's smoking policy well. The biggest offenders are in the classroom, he said.

"We provide "No Smoking" signs to the university, but a sign is worthless without proper enforcement. People will keep right on smoking," Rixstine said. "The enforcement is entirely up to the university."

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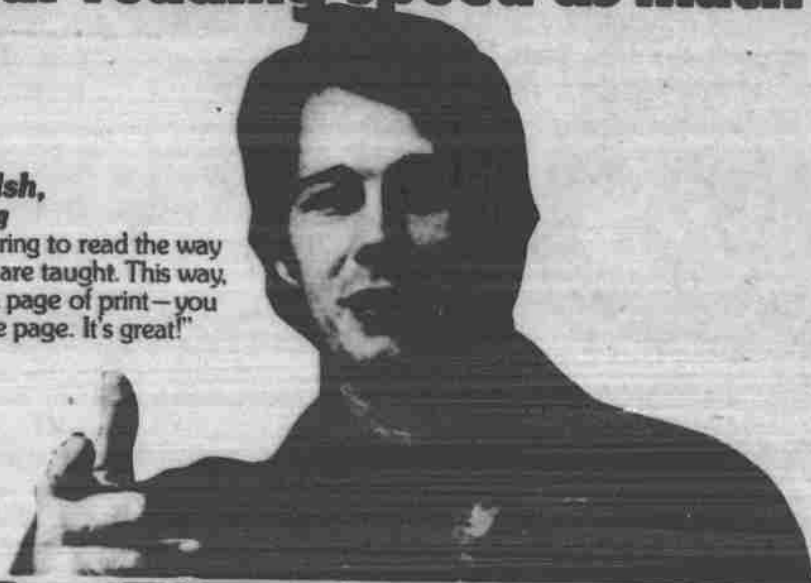
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