



An osprey, silhouetted against the November sky, searches for prey.

Photo by Ted Kirk

daily nebraskan

wednesday, november 16, 1977 vol. 101 no. 42 lincoln, nebraska

Women say attempt to reclassify was 'power play'

By John Ortmann

In continuing testimony in a State Court of Industrial Relations hearing, two UNL Campus Police officers said an attempt to reclassify them as civilian clerks was designed to weaken the police union.

In testimony Monday, officers Barbara McGill and Mary Fleming said John Duve, assistant to the director of Campus Police, and UNL traffic and parking coordinator told them the move was a "power play" by Campus Police Director Gail Gade to prevent them from voting in union elections.

McGill, who is pregnant and Fleming who injured her knee in an off-duty accident, were to be reclassified as civilian clerks because they could not continue patrol duties.

The hearing involves a petition filed by the union charging Gade with discrimination and harassment in the reclassification case.

The women said that in the civilian position they would lose \$2,000 a year in pay and union voting rights. They also testified they feared they would not be rehired as police officers because of their union activities.

Presiding Judge Benjamin Wall said the issue of union voting rights was up to the court and would be decided in a related hearing. Wall said the union may be defined as including only police officers, or it may be extended to include all Campus Police employees.

Fleming testified she was injured Sept. 19. She returned to work on Sept. 22 with a leg brace and a letter from her doctor advising she be assigned desk duty.

She was assigned to assist Duve in what she called a police job which could not be performed by a clerk. She said on Oct. 5 she was asked to submit a letter describing the extent of her injuries and estimating the length of recovery.

This request caused her to be "scared to death" she would be fired, she testified.

She said Gade received the letter and advised her he had three options which had been given him by the UNL personnel office. These were her immediate termination, to have her use up all her sick leave and vacation time and then go on uncompensated leave, or to be reclassified as a clerk.

She said Gade told her he had decided on reclassification, pointing out repeatedly that she could have been fired.

Fleming said she asked for a written guarantee she would be rehired as a police officer upon her recovery, which Gade refused to give her.

She then went to Duve, she said, at which time he allegedly told her the move was a "power play" against the union.

Both women contend reclassification is unnecessary because there is a large amount of police work to do indoors.

This work is normally done by commissioned officers, they said, adding that officers are frequently called in from patrol to handle it.

Duve, in testimony Tuesday, said he made a "general statement" to Fleming that "the whole problem came about because of the union." He explained this remark meant the union had made employees more aware of personnel problems and was not directed at Gade.

He said he understood the reclassification to be temporary and not related to union activities.

He also said the union membership of officer Joy Citta, union president, was never discussed in staff meetings, adding that he has no knowledge of any anti-union activity by the Campus Police administration.

He said the reclassification was seen by the administration as the best course of action for the department and the employees in question. He added that Gade "stretched the rules" to provide the greatest benefits to the women.

He said Campus Police has a policy of assigning desk duty to officers with short term health problems, but not for long-term conditions such as those of officers McGill and Fleming.

The reclassification currently is prevented by a protective order from the court.

The hearing is scheduled to continue at 9:30 a.m. Thursday in Supreme Court Hearing Room Two at the Capitol.

inside wednesday

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Prize-winning chemist says plants might be oil source

By Mike Patten

Americans could be growing their own oil in the near future, according to a Nobel prize-winning chemist.

Melvin Calvin, director of the laboratory of chemical biodynamics at the University of California-Berkeley, Tuesday told about 150 persons at UNL that certain plants can be used to produce oil, and that this can be done economically in the near future.

"It's on the edge of being commercial right now," he said, "and it will be commercial in the next five years."

Calvin won the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1961.

He said an experimental crop of a Puerto Rican plant has yielded 10 barrels of oil per acre at a Berkeley experimental station.

First planting

"What you have to remember, is that this is the first planting of a wild seed," Calvin said. "We haven't even begun to cross-breed or try to perfect the seeds."

Calvin said oil produced from these plants costs \$20 a barrel. Current oil prices are \$13.50 a barrel. He said if this crop increases its production at a rate similar to Malaysian rubber during WWII the results could be tremendous.

According to Calvin, Malaysian rubber production was at 200 lbs., an acre in 1945 and equals 2,000 lbs. an acre today. He said this plant only can be grown in

arid regions, that is why he chose it. Calvin said he currently is looking for plants that can be grown anywhere.

"We don't want to compete with the food-crops for land," he said.

President Carter's decision to depend on coal to carry more America's energy consumption load has problems, he said.

Two constraints

"There are two constraints with burning more coal," he said. "The level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is increasing and it isn't being absorbed by the two great sponges on earth."

Carbon dioxide is a poisonous gas produced by burning coal. The two sponges Calvin was referring to are oceans and green plants on land.

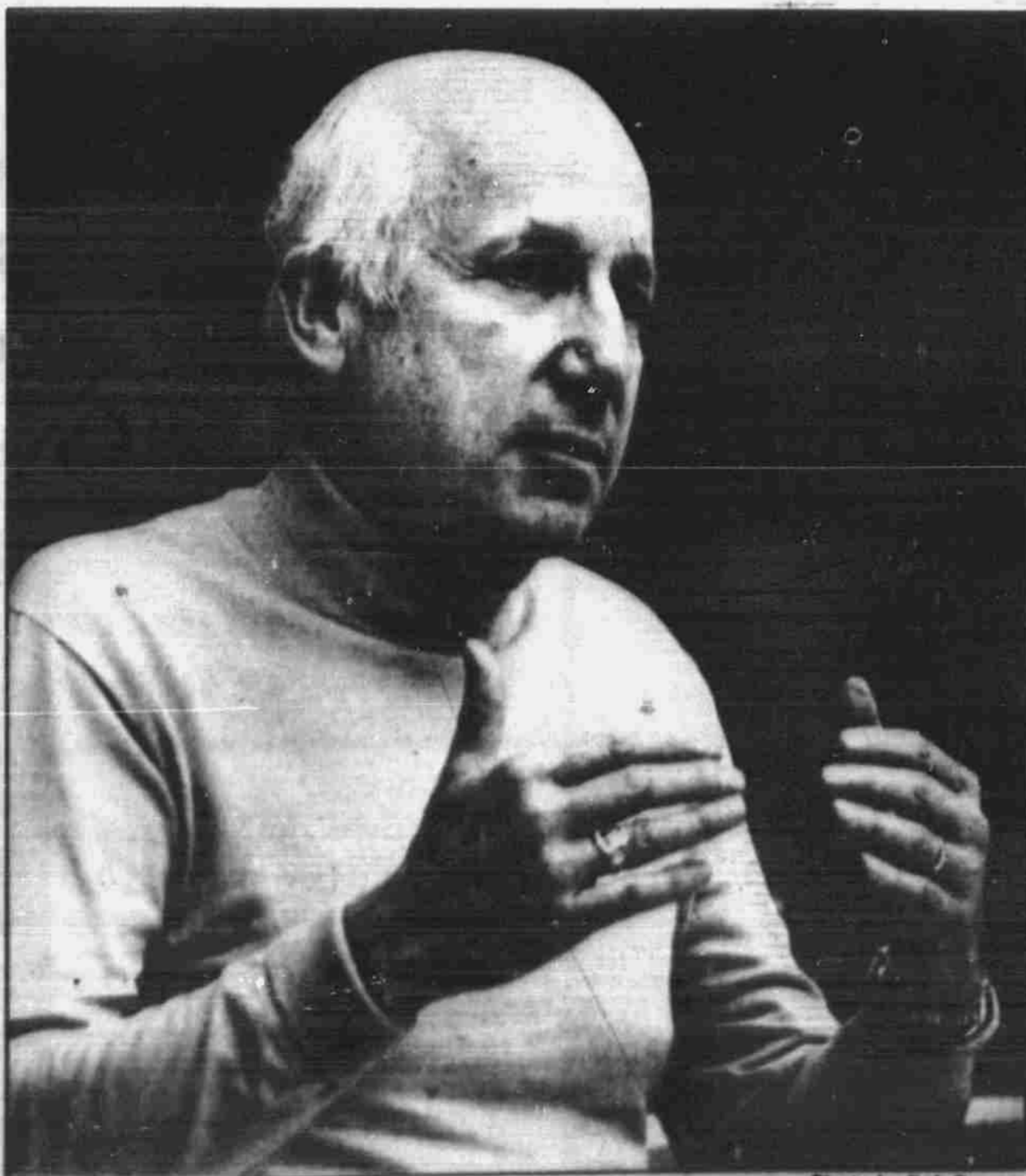
"This constraint is a serious one and there is no way around the constraint if we are going to continue to burn coal at the accelerated rate that we are."

Calvin said the carbon dioxide that is not absorbed by plants or oceans creates a blanket around the earth which keeps heat from escaping. This causes a rise in the earth's average temperature which could have unexpected results, he said.

"It could melt the polar ice regions and flood New York and San Francisco."

Calvin said scientists have measured a 5 percent increase in the level of carbon dioxide not absorbed during the last 20 years.

"I would have thought the plants could keep up though," he said.



Chemist Melvin Calvin

Photo by Bob Pearson