

Self-imposed student fees span tumultuous 41 years

By Paula Dittrock

Contrary to the seemingly endless discussions concerning them, student fees have not been around since the beginning of time. And contrary to popular buck-passing, fees were not created by money-mongering administrators.

It was the students' idea when they voted to tax themselves in 1937. They were told general fund money could not be used to support desired services like ASUN, Daily Nebraskan and UPC.

And 34 years passed without dispute as administrators collected and allocated fee money while periodic student referendums reflected approval of the self-taxation. Besides funding student organizations, fees also supported bond indebtedness.

Then came the late sixties, early seventies and the UNL student fee chaos. Court battles, task forces and an NU Board of Regents freeze on student fees triggered changes in the fee structure, the Fees Allocation Board and future concern about mandatory fees.

Controversy stemmed when Union Program Council and ASUN programs brought speakers to UNL in an attempt to spur discussion about current world events. Conservative factions opposed these speakers and topics.

These factions voiced concern about several events staged on campus between 1970 and 1972. The first was an anti-war strike and occupation of the ROTC building on May 4, 1970. A peace rally followed the next Saturday at the women's athletic field. The rally drew about 5,000 and ASUN paid more than \$1,000 to cover expenses.

The strike was only the beginning.

ASUN supported a "Time Out" conference designed to make students concentrate on the confrontation raised by conference topics.

"Human Sexuality" was the topic of the 1971 conference and speakers included Jack Baker and Mike McConnell, two University of Minnesota students making national headlines as the "nation's first same-sex marriage."

According to *The Student Fee Controversy at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln* by Warren Spencer, "The 1971 Time Out Conference on Human Sexuality undoubtedly was the greatest departure from out of class norms that the University of Nebraska's community had experienced throughout its history of guest speakers. Concurrently never before had the Board of Regents been exposed to such public pressure over such an event."

The Union Program Council previously had launched a World in Revolution symposium inviting speakers to campus to discuss current world problems. The WIRC of 1972 had invited Black Panther Bobby Seale and attorney William Kunstler, figures from the Chicago Seven Trial, to UNL.

The regents froze expenditures of student fee money for one month in December 1972.

Following the fee freeze, an Interim Program Arbitration Board organized to decide what should be done concerning symposium plans. Regents voiced concern and several suggested an end to student fees if the speaker list was not balanced.

The 1972 Justice in America symposium was staged but neither Seale nor Kunstler appeared. The event cost \$9,000 in student fees and it was reported only about .5 percent of the enrollment attended the last day of the eight-day forum.

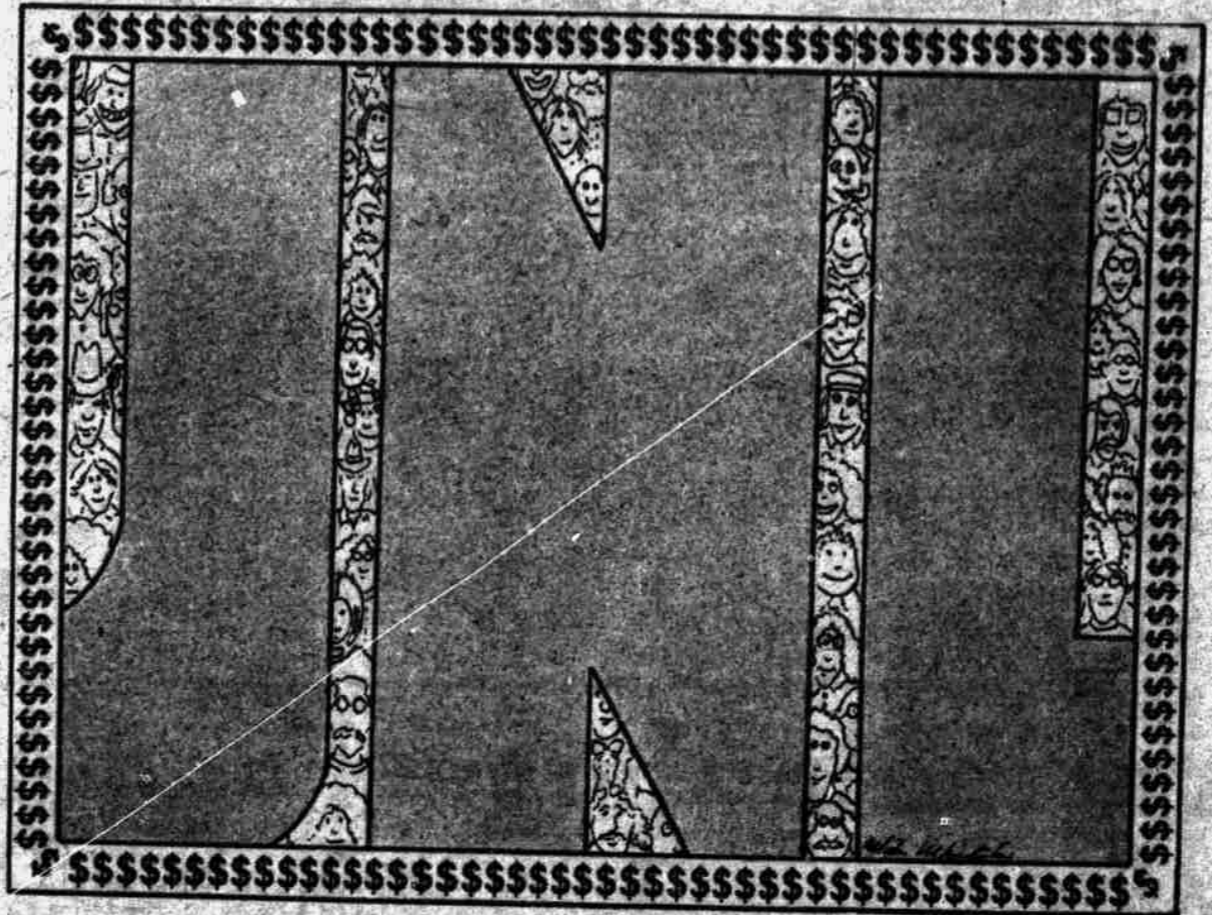
Conservative factions voiced opposition to the distribution of some birth control pamphlets distributed on campus at about the same time as the "Time Out" conference. ASUN purchased the pamphlets but sold them to the Association for Birth Control (another campus organization) before they were distributed.

The Daily Nebraskan also was criticized for its coverage and editorial stands concerning the war in Southeast Asia and campus events.

The theme for future controversy had been set. Five students filed suit against the University of Nebraska charging that they should not be assessed mandatory student fees to support programs outside their interest.

Continued on page 14

student fees



Student input in fees issue builds for Feb. 18 meeting

By Rex Henderson

At least five student organizations will be bombarding the NU Board of Regents, administrators and students with information and arguments on student fees at the regents' Feb. 18 meeting.

Position papers, letter campaigns and petition drives are circulating campus, aimed at influencing the regents' policy on student fees allocation.

If numbers alone can determine the outcome of the fees debate, the pro-fees forces appear to dominate the no-fees forces.

Only one student organization, the Young Americans for Freedom, publicly has opposed using mandatory fees to support speakers and other programs.

According to the president of the campus YAF chapter, Jeff Chizek, YAF will continue to publicize its position through letters and debates. YAF members will participate in a debate with NUPIRG members next Wednesday.

Chizek said he has discussed the issue with all the regents by phone or by mail. Meanwhile, ASUN will be doing its best to gain support for mandatory fees before the regents meeting.

ASUN president Greg Johnson said the objective is to "get the information out." An ASUN position paper sent to the regents last week argues that fee support for speaker programs is essential to protect an "open marketplace of ideas."

Ending mandatory fee support for

speakers programs would "effectively censor and stifle the exchange of ideas and thought stimulation that are an integral part of a healthy university environment," the paper states.

Johnson said he and ASUN Vice Presi-

dent Charlie Fellingham have spoken at residence halls, greek houses and before the Residence Hall Association and the Council on Student Life in an attempt to gain support.

ASUN also is sponsoring a petition drive

aimed at gathering 8,000 to 10,000 signatures.

Johnson said he has sent the regents information on the fees issue. Johnson said regents' response has been encouraging.

"Everyone (including the regents) is in agreement that it is the student government that should make the decisions" in allocating student fees, Johnson said. Regents Ed Schwartzkopf of Lincoln and Dr. Robert Prokop of Omaha have been especially encouraging, he said.

The ASUN position paper "supports the concept that only programs and services that benefit a significant portion of the UNL student body should be funded."

The Residence Hall Association and the Council on Student Life have joined ASUN in support of the current fee system.

Mike Eyster, Abel-Sandoz residence hall complex program director and a CSL member, said CSL has resolved to write the regents in support of the maintenance of student fees.

Eyster said the CSL position is that fees "should not be suspended on the basis of one speaker or one controversy."

RHA president Mike Gibson said RHA voted unanimously to support the ASUN petition drive.

NUPIRG last week completed a study of student fees at the request of ASUN.

The study showed that the Fund A money provides a great deal of benefits to the students at a reasonable cost, said Don Macke, NUPIRG president.

Task force to present three ideas to regents

Recommendations of a task force report on student fees will be discussed at an NU Board of Regents meeting Saturday.

Three recommendations outline the task force proposals. The regents may adopt, reject or amend these suggestions in any way.

The first recommendation proposes:

-a program combining mandatory and optional fees beginning July 1.

-fee support for three student-operated organizations including, ASUN, Daily Nebraskan and Union Program Council.

-ASUN be given the fee allocation functions now performed by the Fees Allocation Board.

-ASUN sponsor agencies and UPC sponsor programs "in conjunction with

other student organizations" upon chancellor approval.

-granting of seed money funds for newly organized groups on a one-time basis to meet initial groups' programming needs.

The second recommendation suggests:

-a campus-by-campus review of fees used to meet bond debts and to support the Nebraska and East Unions and the University Health Center.

-such a study, similar to the present task force study of fee support for student organizations, would examine the possibility of converting fee users to other funding sources.

The third recommendation proposes a student body referendum prior to a fee increase to cover capital construction costs.

Administrative opinions vary on proposed fee reforms

The report by the student fees task force tops the piles of clutter on many UNL administrators' desks.

The position which the report occupies amidst the mounds of memos and papers reflects the question which rests uppermost in the minds of administrators and students -that of the future of student fees.

Richard Armstrong, UNL vice chancellor for student affairs, said the report's recommendations that mandatory student fees support only those agencies serving a majority of students also raises questions as to the future of some campus organizations.

The report's recommendations would result in limitations on some university organizations, Armstrong said.

"Some organizations will become extinct and others will become more innovative."

UNL Chancellor Roy Young said the university "may have to look at other ways to help them (organizations) help themselves."

The concern for cutting costs is here to stay, Armstrong said, and is "a recognition of the increasing conservatism of our economy."

"We've just got to be more selective. Otherwise, the costs will be unmanageable."

But, he said he opposes elimination of mandatory fees. "I'm afraid that if that should happen we'd lose some of the quality of our programs."

Concerning a recommendation to shift FAB's functions to ASUN, Armstrong said broadening ASUN's role would strengthen student government.

It (ASUN) will touch upon the lives of more students and therefore will transfer into a better image of ASUN," he said.

Others interpret the task force report differently. Task Force Chairman Hans Brisch said "the intent of the report is to have an allocations board reporting to student government."

A review of Fund E programs recommended by the report has received a "yes" vote from most UNL administrators.

Although Fund B is reviewed each year in preparing budget requests, Young said "perhaps there needs to be a more in-depth review."

Armstrong called Fund B programs "the real users." Armstrong expressed "grave concerns over our ability to hold the line." He said modest inflation rates would increase student fees.

Any additional bond debts also translate into more student costs.

The idea of a student referendum to approve a fee increase for construction would serve as a "check and balance," according to Brisch.

Calling it an impractical recommendation, Armstrong said he had some "ethical qualms" about calling a referendum before program expansion.

"My concern is about asking students questions and then not taking the advice," he said. "It implies something not very positive."

"If I know I can't do something I can't ask students if they want to do it or not," he explained. "When you ask a question one must be pretty open to the response."

Young refused to comment on this recommendation, claiming it might influence the regents' decision.