

opinion/
editorial

Legislators, not teachers, assign education morality

Morality is controversial in the public schools these days. Most people involved—parents, teachers and administrators—agree that morals should be part of the curriculum.

The controversy arises over whose version of morality should be taught.

"There are some values that are generally accepted in our society" and that the schools should teach, Associate Superintendent Ron Brandt said, as quoted by the Lincoln Journal. But, "we ought not to be heavy-handed and doctrinaire about it."

"Moral education is not indoctrination. A poorly led discussion may be worse than no discussion at all."

Sounds reasonable, but Brandt does not account for one factor: State law requires moral indoctrination that is both heavy-handed and doctrinaire.

Here are excerpts from state statutes: "Each teacher . . . shall so arrange and

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present his instruction as to give special emphasis to common honesty, morality, courtesy, obedience to law, respect for the national flag, the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitution of the State of Nebraska, respect for parents and the home, the dignity and necessity for honest labor, and other lessons of a steady influence which tend to promote and develop an upright and desirable citizenry.

" . . . it is one of the first duties of our educational system to (teach) the love of liberty, justice, democracy, and America

"Every school board shall, at the beginning of each school year, appoint from its members a committee of three, to be known as the committee on Americanism . . ." The committee is to approve use of textbooks which "adequately stress the services of the men who achieved our national independence, established our constitutional government, and preserved our Union and shall be so written to include contributions by ethnic groups as to develop a pride and respect for our institutions . . ."

Also, the committee is charged with determining the character of teachers and ensuring their "knowledge and acceptance of the American form of government . . ."

Grades below sixth grade are legally bound to devote at least one hour a week to "the deeds and exploits of American

heroes," "the singing of patriotic songs and the insistence that every pupil shall memorize the Star Spangled Banner and America" and "the development of reverence for the flag."

In two of the grades from fifth to eighth, at least three periods a week are to be devoted to teaching American history "to develop a love of country."

In two grades in high school another three periods a week must focus on the state and federal constitution, the duties of citizenship and "the benefits and advantages of our form of government and the

dangers and fallacies of Nazism, Communism, and similar ideologies."

School boards, superintendents, teachers and the State Board of Education are held responsible for carrying out the law. If they don't—if, apparently, pupils can't sing the multiple verses of the Star Spangled Banner, if a teacher neglects for a few days to point out the evils of Nazism or bypasses a chance to plug flag-waving—the statute spells out the consequences.

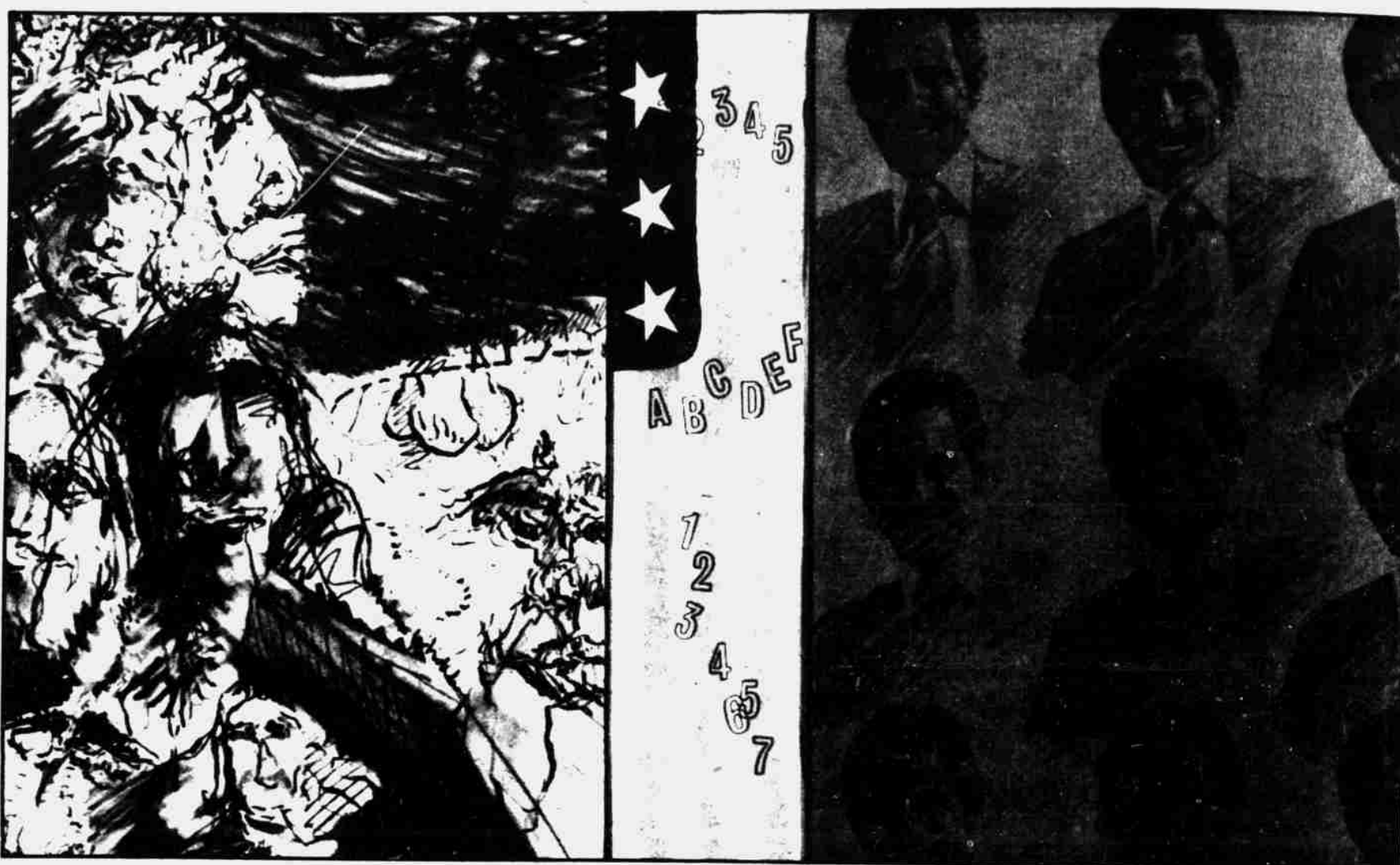
Violation is a Class III misdemeanor, which carries a fine of up to \$500, a jail

term of up to three months or both.

This renders moot a good part of the controversy over moral education. Educators are trying to help students to develop their own capacity for moral reasoning, to weigh the evidence and come to their own conclusions.

Wrong. The Legislature has long since directed otherwise. The schools shall, under penalty of law, hand students a pre-prepared, complete package of approved morals and accepted opinions.

Salute when the flag goes by, boy.



letters to the editor

Saturday the NU Board of Regents adopted President Roskens' proposal to reallocate Fund A through student fees. I signed the ASUN-sponsored petition against this amendment and was unhappy with the result of the regent's meeting.

In a Monday editorial, the Daily Nebraskan doubted the regents' suggestion that a \$1 box placed on tuition statements would raise enough money to fund speakers.

However, \$1 included with tuition payment would be a lesser financial burden than any pay-at-the-door plan.

On the premise that speakers provide educational benefits otherwise unavailable to many students, those who support mandatory fees for speakers still would be able to express their opinions through the "buck box."

Because I favor a fees-supported speaker

program, I also advocate a buck box or similar channel through which students can afford to support the program.

Just as sports is physical education that could not be funded solely by participants, the speaker program is intellectual education whose cost cannot be borne only by those wishing to expose themselves to different ideas.

Kathy Jursch
Freshman business major

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Applications may be turned in where they are available.

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