

guest
opinion

Speaker checkoff considered a matter of conscience

The guest opinion was written by Vance Colling, a junior pre-med major from Sidney. Colling also is a member of the Nebraska Union Board.

As a student who attended the Feb. 18 NU Board of Regents meeting, I agree with the visible majority of students who feel that halting mandatory funding for speakers is a severe blow to the educational experience at UNL.

After paying more than \$25 a semester to the University Health Center for three years without using that service, I also can understand (although disagree with) the position of the Young Americans for Freedom. I wish, however, to expand upon points made at that meeting.

—Don Orton, a UNL student who spoke to the board on his own behalf, said the speaker selection system is designed to exclude all but a chosen set of students. This is incorrect.

The Talks and Topics Committee, which sponsors the speakers, is part of the Union Program Council. The Talks and Topics chairperson is appointed by former UPC members, members of the Nebraska Union Board. Committee members join voluntarily, and have no requirements to meet. The

Union Board in turn is constructed of 10 students out of 14 voting members. Eight of the students are appointed by ASUN. In all, this represents four groups (ASUN, Union Board, UPC, and Talks and Topics Committee) to which the student can complain or on which he may serve.

The Union Board, program councils, and their committees repeatedly request input from students, yet constructive suggestions rarely are heard. The general response is given after decisions are made. I must question whether Mr. Orton has attempted to operate through these established groups.

—Concerning the representation of the Young Americans for Freedom, the only speaker I recall who spoke on behalf of YAF was Robert Stock, English professor, who has no direct stake in student fees.

Mr. Orton, after some time, admitted that he was a member of YAF, but quickly iterated that he was not speaking on their behalf. It seems difficult, indeed, to find an official student voice for YAF.

—I draw an analogy between voluntary funding suggested for the speakers program and the Presidential Election Cam-

paign Fund used on Internal Revenue Service tax forms. One important sentence on the tax form has not been mentioned. It states "Note: Checking 'Yes' to allocate \$1 to the fund) will not increase your tax or reduce your refund." This is simply a way of allocating the tax being paid, and in no way alters the overall amount being paid.

Under the check-off system proposed by the Regents for speaker funding, as I understand it, students could pay to that fund or not pay. This would severely limit funding, since few students have enough cash at tuition time, and given a choice, many will pay the least possible amount.

The proposed check-off system should not alter the amount paid, but rather alter distribution of mandatory fees. Students wishing to withhold their fees from speaker funding, contribute instead to a contingency fund, to make up for unplanned deficits in other UPC and EUPC committees, as "seed" money for other organizations, as emergency funding for ASUN projects, and/or as a carryover to the Fund A allocation process for the next year.

The decision to contribute would be one of conscience and not one of economics. This system, I believe, also would be less expensive to administer.

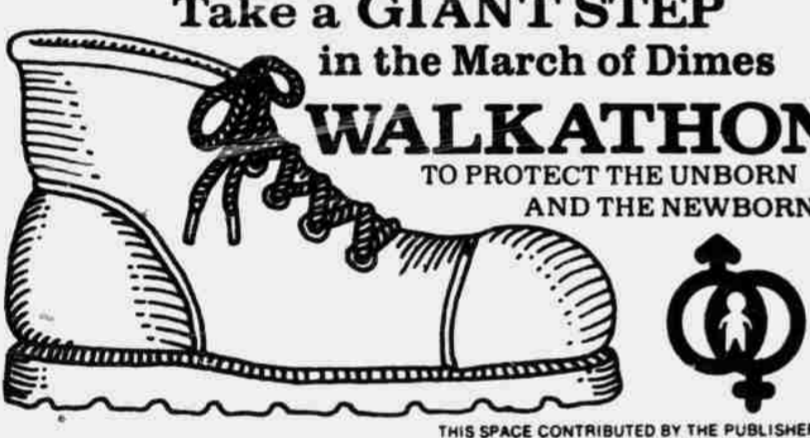
A check-off system with four possibilities (to support or not support PACE, and to support or not to support speaker funding) would create additional book-keeping procedures, increase administrative costs, and further increase tuition.

—It is uncertain how much money can be generated from a check-off system. Since the amount of funding available will not be known until well into the semester, it is probable that speakers will have to be booked based on the previous year's funds.

What senior is going to pay for a speaker he will not be around to hear, particularly when he has the option of keeping that money for himself?

The regents are not finished with this issue by any means. Students should strive to be heard and watch as the system develops.


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