

editorial

Senate ineffectiveness causes 'reluctant' endorsement

It hurts, but the tough cynical exterior of good pressmen won't go here. Instead we are back to our old idealism and we are a little embarrassed about it.

In the middle of ASUN election campaigns, the Daily Nebraskan once again takes a stand and endorses a candidate.

However, our first reaction to the two joke parties and student apathy toward elections was to skip the endorsement altogether. Our second reaction was that we really did not have a choice. With two joke candidates and another basing his campaign on moving the Apollo space capsule, our decision was pretty much made for us.

The Daily Nebraskan is endors-

ing Ken Marienau, SOAR, reluctantly.

We sympathize with Lyle George's frustrations about student apathy. He has said that the average student just does not care about campus issues and is trying through jokes to get them interested. That is an interesting idea, but we are skeptical.

Perhaps Charles Engh is right in campaigning on issues such as moving the space capsule and revamping ASUN to be as uncomplicated as possible. He may be realistic in the idea that rather than a powerful legislative body, ASUN should be a tool for small changes on campus.

Nevertheless, we cannot bring ourselves to give up on the idea of a powerful ASUN.

That brings us to Jim Bachman

(POOR) and Ken Marienau.

Bachman has some good ideas such as concentrating on the campus parking problem and scrutinizing Fund B. We also agree that his party is realistically avoiding such issues as a voting student regent and an alcohol on campus proposal.

We agree these goals are unrealistic and probably nothing more than campaign rhetoric, but we believe that the strength of an ASUN president is his position as student regent. For this reason, we cannot support a candidate who wants "to forget about the Board of Regents."

In the end we support Ken Marienau. Marienau has been active in student government and has worked with administrators. We feel he is re-

sponsible and could be a good liaison between students and regents.

We also agree with his idea to expand current ASUN services such as the book exchange and Free University.

But Marienau as well as most of the SOAR candidates worry us with repetitive and idealistic cries of getting a voting student regent and decreasing student apathy. We hope they realize the odds against solving either problem.

Without ideals, ASUN would not have worthwhile goals to direct their energies toward, but idealism needs to be backed by determination and tenacity.

We hope Marienau has both. He will need them.

Idealism complicates goals; ASUN misplaces good efforts

Perhaps we're deluded by the role student government should play.

As idealists, we would like to think student government could be effective, pull a lot of weight with the administration and work miracles to benefit the general student population.

But such is the stuff dreams are made of.

Year after year, ASUN campaigns ring of curing student apathy, getting the vote for the voting student regent and controlling student fees. You'd think that if these issues were important enough to be talked about every year, something would be done.

But the point is that there is nothing to be done. At least not within the structure of UNL student government.

This is not a criticism of ASUN past and present. For too long, campus politicians have blamed senate members for ineffective government. But what's the use of blaming someone when their hands are tied by the very framework they're working within?

Is ASUN worth it? Outside of the fact that a student government is necessary for UNL to keep a good accreditation and that a year on student senate looks good on the old resume, do we really need it?

Look at the evidence this year. Everyone chuckles at the joke parties and the pseudo issues they address. But these joke parties are telling us something reflecting students' attitudes toward ASUN. A joke?

As for the more serious candidates, as noble as their intentions may be, we question if they will have much power as student president-student regent to achieve the lofty heights outlined in their platforms. Perhaps they should re-evaluate and direct their energies and talents toward more practical, feasible goals.

We're not knocking their idealism, just reminding student leaders with

stars in their eyes that always reaching for the best often results in a handful of empty air—or hot air, as a lot of past student leaders have demonstrated.

For example, instead of breaking backs trying to get a voting student regent (an effort that's run into brick walls for years) why not take a more realistic approach and push for a student to run for one of the eight voting regent spots? The Lincoln regent spot is up for re-election this fall.

Student apathy can only be cured by **doing** something. Student government, instead of spouting proclamations that all ASUN needs is a "little enthusiasm," should abandon this pep club routine and work to improve existing student services (as past senates have attempted), or to create new ones.

The sad fact is that so many of these constructive activities already are being performed by other student organizations. These are students working quietly within administrative channels to actually accomplish something.

And it's working. Look at the programs sponsored by UPC, the legislative lobbying and student fee research done by NUPIRG and the budget-cutting, service-oriented efforts of the Union Board. And gee, these hard-working students are not even paid for their efforts.

As terrible as it may sound, perhaps ASUN is an expensive duplication of student efforts. Most of ASUN's work could be absorbed by other student organizations. As for ASUN's duty to appoint students to various committees and policy-making boards, do we really need 35 senators, two vice presidents and one president working with a \$35,000 budget to do all that?

We strongly urge next year's senate to re-evaluate their role at UNL.



Ending student apathy, voting student regents, controlling student fees, ending student apathy, voting student regents, controlling student fees...

Practical application prevents stunted knowledge of three Rs

A Kurt Vonnegut Jr. short story (*Harrison Bergeron*, 1961) lampooned America as it might be under laws requiring absolute equality. The athletically inclined wear sandweights and bags of birdshot; the beautiful wear ugly masks, and the intelligent wear government-controlled radio headphones which let off a mind-boggling sound every 20 seconds or so to insure that they can't keep their thoughts together long enough to think.

Vonnegut set his story in the year 2081. But the shadow of mental conformity can be seen now. When the topic is education and the slogans are "back to the basics," "cut the frills" or "minimum competency tests," sandbags and headphones can be seen on the sidelines.

claim that school has to taste bad to be good.

Together they call for a return to traditional education: the Three R's plus discipline, dress codes and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The public schools barely challenge many of their students.

Conservative reformers would bore these good students even more by drilling them all day in skills they have already mastered. Cost cutters would put them and their struggling classmates in large classes with a single overworked teacher—classrooms where no one can get the individual attention needed to gain basic skills or to use them to explore higher levels of learning.

Basic skills, even the Three R's, are not an end in themselves. They are merely tools. For students, it is the exercise of these tools, or the "frills," that motivate them to learn the needed basic skills.

Here is a college-level example: The English Department shies away from teaching grammar. Students and teachers alike detest the drills; they are a boring grind.

Move a couple of buildings west to the School of Journalism. Here, grammar, spelling, syntax and punctuation are central parts of most courses at all levels. And the school is experiencing a population boom. The difference is that skills are applied as they are being learned (through reporting and editing), and the learning is interesting.

Despite this, high school newspapers are one of the "frills" the cost-cutters want to cut. This is a cost that even a Three R's freak can't calculate, as minimum standards become maximum standards.

ray
walden

Back-to-the-basics advocates would object to this analogy. The nation's youth is lapsing into illiteracy, they would argue, while hauling out a ream of studies to prove their point.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) average score has dropped 30 points in 12 years. An estimated 20 million American adults are functionally illiterate.

Still, there is a problem, new or not. Enough young people begin adult life lacking basic survival skills that this is (as it always has been) the greatest challenge for educators.

The solution offered by the hodgepodge of people collected under the back-to-the-basics banner may be one way out. But it threatens to tie sandbags on the majority of students who long since have met minimum standards.

Part of the pressure for competency standards comes from groups who don't trust teachers, who suspect school administrators and who rail in general against pointy-headed intellectuals.

Others in the movement are taxpayers in revolt against school budgets who want to cut the frills and limit education to the Three R's and educational puritans who

