

opinion/editorial

Pumping more money into prisons may not be solution

The Nebraska penal institutions are in a period of change. Plans are underway to build new prisons, but just throwing money into new buildings will probably not eliminate many of the prisons current problems.

The changes include the construction of a \$9 million men's reformatory, and a new penitentiary, along with expanding rehabilitation and community-based correctional programs.

The present reformatory holds at least 300 inmates and the new building will have cells for about 320 men. The new penitentiary will accommodate about 425 prisoners,

but the current prison houses close to 600 men.

It seems a futile effort to spend money to build a new prison that will not even accommodate the present number of incarcerated men.

The prison will have monumental problems on its hands when the trustee dormitory that houses 200 inmates is turned into an educational building. There have been no plans made for a new trustee dormitory. Where will these men be sent?

Prison Director Joseph Vitek said he doesn't know where the men will be relocated and it is only wishful thinking that they will not be sent back to the penitentiary.

Inmates who obtain trustee status, which is given to more reliable inmates, will receive quite a blow when they are forced to life in a tighter security unit such as the prison, but retain their status.

Yet, if the prisons are still ever crowded when the new facilities are completed, the buildings will not do anything except possibly add to the atrophic value of the inmate community.

Over-crowding and undertrained staff members are a prime concern to the prison. It will be of absolutely no value to pump money into a new building if these problems can not be corrected.

In the new reformatory there will be one counselor to about 11 inmates, contrasted with the current ratio of 65 to 100 inmates per

counselor.

This is commendable, but what about guards? All that is required of guards is a high school education and there usually are not enough on hand at night to observe and control problems.

As for community-based correctional facilities, such as half-way houses, Vitek is right when he says citizens agree it's a good move, but not in my neighborhood.

The Legislature stresses that there should be a greater reliance on these services, but it may have to step in and act if people refuse to allow them in their neighborhood.

After all if someone close to you is arrested for possession of marijuana, you may realize it's not just the kids from the wrong side of the tracks that end up in the pen.

ASUN recall an attempt to solidify student impact

For some time, ASUN has conformed to UNL's standard channel for student input: the faculty-student committee. But although such conformity was reasonable, it was also ineffective.

As George Bernard Shaw wrote: "Reasonable men try to adapt themselves to the world. Unreasonable men persist in trying to adapt the world to themselves, and so all progress depends on unreasonable men."

michael gibson

Wednesday night, the ASUN Senate decided to become a bit unreasonable.

By a unanimous roll call vote, the senate recalled its appointees to 27 university committees, including Union Board, the Council on Student Life, Parking Advisory, and the University Judiciary.

Controversial decision

The decision became immediately controversial, as the *Daily Nebraskan*, concerned over recent closed sessions by both the Regents and the Parking Advisory Board, threw its full fury at the ASUN closed session.

But their charges of buffaloed bills missed the point: for the first time in years, ASUN had formally indicted UNL's committee system, officially informing the administration that student input through committees was as substantial as the Platte River in August.

Indeed, student input could be best described as a mile wide and six inches deep. ASUN appoints over 70 students to 27 committees, leaving its efforts spread thinly and unable to concentrate on major issues.

ASUN's power is equally diffused. The Council on Student Life controls activities out of the classroom; Union Board controls the Nebraska Union; Parking Advisory controls student parking. ASUN, the student government, controls football migrations.

Concerns unrecognized

And those committees consist not just of students, but of faculty and staff as well, who do not always recognize student concerns. Even if they do, the final decisions are left to appropriate administrators, who sometimes defend their decisions by pointing out that they had student input, even if they didn't listen to it.

In short, working for change through the committee system has been as effective as trying to cram for five finals in one night: not many results and not much sleep.

Student government leaders long have recognized the need for a change. However, this fall may be the first time in years that they stand a chance of effecting it.

The reason is simple: this year the administration has to listen. With a major fund-raising drive in progress and the upcoming Parent's Weekend heavily dependent on student support, student unrest is one thing the administration cannot afford.

Dangerous gamble

But there is danger in ASUN's gamble.

If ASUN decides to set up its own all-student committees to parallel the existing faculty-student committees, what cooperation from the administration will they receive?

In addition, the new student committees will be difficult for ASUN to coordinate, though not as hard as in the present system.

And what of those students now on university committees decide to play favorite son and reject the restructuring plan simply because it would cost them their appointments?

Finally, the proposed restructuring is so immense and complex that ASUN may end up only confusing itself or engaging in endless debates, as have past efforts to revise the ASUN constitution.

Significant silence

But there is hope. Student affairs administrators have indicated a general willingness to work with, not against, ASUN. Indeed, the lack of official opposition to the move is significant.

Student reaction has been even more encouraging. ASUN contacted and received support from several government leaders, past and present, and at least one past ASUN president.

Of course it is still far too early to tell if ASUN has created a pile of buffalo chips or a major step in improving its effectiveness in representing UNL students.

And some still see this as just another ploy to gain more power for ASUN members. Perhaps ASUN is wrong in trying to strengthen itself, in arming itself with a centralized system of all-student committees fighting to present student views to the administration.

Then again, as Machiavelli said, "all the armed prophets conquered. All the unarmed ones—perished."



EVERYONE ELSE WHO WORKS FOR THE GSA, BRINGS HOME COLOR TVS,,, OR STEREOS,,, OR REFRIGERATORS,,,

letters

My intention is not to address the issues of controversy concerning the YAF specifically, but to reflect upon the general tendencies in the academy which are evident in this controversy and elsewhere. The tendency has been to think of the YAF as being politically misfit and misanthropic? neither is true. The solipsism of such thinking tends to obscure what I have observed in the university from the eyes of others and it is time for the general dissenting opinion.

It seems to behoove some, with good intention no doubt, to ascertain what the consequences must be among the students. They then proceed to supply ideas and attitudes to conform to their perception of consensus. Hence arise the "forms" which are the purveyors of ideas.

Supposedly Jane Fonda and her crowd speak for the students. Ralph Nader is the oracle for consumers. George McGovern appealed to a largely mythical proletariat. Our president, Jimmy Carter appeals to the "common man," thinking his "Christian Socialism" must be what the "common man" desires. The YAF has assigned itself the role of resisting such bad epistemology. And be their means practical or not, their dissent is indispensable.

For myself, supporting speaker funding is an act of faith and a more practical alternative. I believe that self-initiative can successfully resist that spirit pervading the academy—that of collectivist mentality and the newspeak rhetoric so persuasive here. But Buckley's admonishments—warnings to the Welfare State and to those who follow knowingly the "Road to Serfdom"—fell upon unresponsive ears last year. Much more commendable to the students' mentality were the vituperations

against capitalism. The facile and at best, dubious economic remarks made by Jane Fonda were just what they were waiting to hear. Ralph Nader's overworn homilies attacking the "Affluent Society," were great entertainment to all. The possible consequences of these ideas were not contemplated by those who had never known tyranny.

Ours is a society endowed with liberty; and hence the free exchange of ideas is vital. But let us, the students contemplate what is being ascertained as our consensus. Let us be reminded of those misfits; they love freedom as passionately as any. And bear in mind when anarchy nearly rent the country asunder, the YAF was one of the few politically sane youth groups on the campus. By their legacy of reasoned activism, dedicated to the tradition of freedom, the invective against them should be dispensed with.

Stanford L. Sipple

Closet hypocrites

Many groups on campus openly advocate every kind of behavior, from group sex, homosexuality, to violent overthrow of the government. So what would you think of a Hypocrites Liberation Movement?

I have found that not many people support views of hypocrites or hypocrites themselves. I've never heard anyone say, "I'm a hypocrite and proud of it." In fact, students who proclaim values farthest from those accepted by society as moral are the quickest to complain about hypocrites in the church and state. It seems to me that no matter how gross a man becomes, he always maintains a disgust with hypocrisy?

Tell me, so you pass judgment on others? When you judge others but do the same things that they do, you are condemning yourself. Do you have any excuse? For no one has consistently lived up to the standards he demands of others. I invite all hypocrites out of their closets to be liberated from their hypocrisy.

How do you live up to this statement? "Do not judge lest you be judged yourself. For in the way you judge you will be judged and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you." (Jesus Christ.) Matthew 7:1.

Scott Nason

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