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RYE SMITH '77

Daily Nebraskan's policies questioned by Regent Prokop

By Brenda Moskovits

Members of the NU Board of Regents Saturday questioned some of the editorial standards of the *Daily Nebraskan*, but an attempt to regulate newspaper treatment of the names of persons involved in criminal proceedings failed after a disagreement about parliamentary procedure.

Regent Robert Prokop of Wilber had requested that UNL Publications Board chairman Mark Bowen, director of the UNL School of Journalism Neale Copple, and *Daily Nebraskan* adviser C. David Kotok appear before the board's academic affairs subcommittee.

Although the regents are the official publishers of the paper, Prokop said "I cannot support some of the journalistic practices."

Prokop said he objected to numerous mistakes requiring corrections, unfavorable coverage of the regents, unsigned letters to the editor and printing of names of witnesses which were requested withheld.

He also said he wanted to know how the publications board and the paper's adviser protect the regents from libel suits.

Kotok, who is a reporter at the *Lincoln Journal* told the regents the *Daily Nebraskan* uses "a higher ethical standard" than area papers in publishing corrections.

He said the policy is "whenever there is the slightest misunderstanding . . . to publish a correction."

"I do not as a rule read stories before they go in the paper," he said, "except where there is a question of libel." He said in those cases he comes to the newspaper office or has a short story read to him over the phone.

Kotok said he has consulted legal counsel on potentially libelous stories.

Prokop said he was concerned that the *Daily Nebraskan* had published the names of two witnesses in preliminary hearing in the Debra Forycky case. No other Nebraska paper published the names.

Names requested withheld

Kotok told the board the county attorney had requested that the press withhold the names, but acknowledged he could not legally bind them to do so.

"I can make a strong case that none of the names should be printed. I can make a strong case that all the names should be printed," Kotok said.

Kotok said he personally would have published only one name. One witness had endorsed the county attorney's re-election campaign, he said.

One of the women, who works in the county attorney's office, appeared before the subcommittee, asking that the regents impose stricter supervision on the *Daily Nebraskan*. She told the regents she was hurt by having her name published.

Although the assault which she testified about was not a sexual attack, she said the publicity hurt her.

Moylan suggests split

Regent James Moylan of Omaha suggested that the regents partially subsidize the paper until it could become a self-supporting private enterprise, with its own board of directors.

Copple said, however, that other papers which have become totally independent have suffered in quality. Often, their control goes to non-students, he said.

Research into the possibility has shown that the *Daily Nebraskan* would have to move off campus, if the university is to have no responsibility.

Later, in the general meeting, Moylan proposed that student newspapers follow the policy of their city papers in printing names of those charged with, involved with, or those who are victims of crimes. The *Daily Nebraskan* would follow *Journal-Star* policy and the *UNO Gateway* would follow *Omaha World-Herald* policy.

In a 4-1 vote with 3 regents abstaining, Koeft ruled the motion had passed, until student Regent Ken Marienau pointed out that a majority of votes were needed to pass the motion.

Committee appointed

University Counsel Richard Wood verified Marienau's point with the regents' by-laws, so the motion failed.

After discussion and disagreement as to whether an abstention should count as a "no" vote, Koeft appointed a committee of Moylan, Regent Robert Simmons of Scottsbluff and Robert Raun of Minden to study the by-laws and guidelines used by the press in publishing names.

Prokop, Moylan, Simmons and Wagner supported the motion, and Koeft opposed it. Raun, Kermit Hansen of Omaha, and Edward Schwartzkopf of Lincoln abstained.

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