

opinion/editorial

Brainwash theory touted in commutation of Hearst

President Carter's commutation of Patty Hearst's prison sentence is bound to be criticized by a few hardcore holdouts who remain convinced that money and prestige, not justice, prevail.

And the president's decision is being roundly applauded by many who see the move as simply a charitable one. But perhaps the importance of the commutation is being clouded by pro and con sentimentality.

When President Carter exercised his power of executive clemency he also became, intentionally or not, an advocate of the brainwashing theory. It is quite possible that the events in Jonestown, Guyana helped the president make the decision; if 900 people can be persuaded to kill each other and themselves, certainly it's possible for 20-year-old girl to be persuaded by her kidnapers to be-

come a slogan-spewing, gun-toting, bank-robbing Tania.

If a small, collectively unstable group of malcontents like the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) can apply brainwashing techniques so successfully, the human mind does have, in Patty Hearst's own words, a "disquieting vulnerability."

Hearst probably was ripe for the plucking by the SLA. She may have been the stereotypical rich girl, lacking some of the things money won't buy. The SLA preyed on her needs and perhaps gave her a sense of purpose in a formerly purposeless life.

There are a lot of people out there, rich and poor, who are waiting for something or someone to come along and fill their empty lives. If the mind is as vulnerable as many would have us believe, we haven't seen the last of the Jonestown and the Patty Hearsts.



Education department would give feds policy control

I suppose there may be some bureaucratic efficiencies that have resulted from the creation of the Department of Energy.

But bureaucratic efficiency was not the reason for creating the department. President Carter wanted to pull together the bits and pieces of energy programs scattered throughout the federal bureaucracy for one principal reason: so that the federal government could bring a unified approach to energy—so it could get a handle on energy policy.

**william
raspberry**

Similarly, there might be some efficiencies that would result from the creation of a Department of Education, though I doubt it.

Government grip

But don't kid yourself for one second that efficiency is the reason the backers of the idea are so fervent about it. The real reason is that pulling together the bits and pieces of education-linked programs presently scattered throughout the federal bureaucracy would give the federal government—and those who could reasonably expect to influence the new department—a handle on educational policy.

The difference between the two things is this: We were pretty well agreed that we needed a rational, consistent federal policy on energy. But we are by no means agreed that we want a federal policy on education, with Washington taking over more of the policy function now relegated to state and local officials.

Policy question

We aren't agreed because we haven't even debated the question. We haven't understood that the creation of a Department of Education is in fact a policy question, not merely a matter of efficiency.

Do we want a federal policy on education? The impulse is to say: Why not? Standards (for high school graduation, for instance) vary so much from jurisdiction to jurisdiction that a diploma cannot be taken at face value. Why not a single, federal standard?

Wouldn't it make sense to have consistent standards to determine what and how much children should be expected to learn at every grade level? After all, we already have nationally standardized tests to see what they've absorbed.

First day applause

"That's easy enough for you noneducators to say," one government official told me. "But if one of us said it, I can pre-

dict what would happen."

"The first day, there would be applause. The second day, the unions and chief state school officials and the school board would attack.

"And the third day, the same people who thought it such a wonderful idea on Day One would begin saying, 'On second thought...'"

The scenario might not be far off. The teachers' unions—including members of the National Education Association, one of the major lobbyists for the proposed department—would quickly learn that national standards for what and how much should be taught would naturally lead to national standards for determining who is qualified to teach. All teachers' colleges are not created equal.

The state and county school authorities would attack because they are responsible for running some of these bad schools. The school boards would resent the federal usurpation of their policy-making role.

Okay, I know that the supporters of the proposed department don't anticipate federal standard-setting and policy-making. Their dubious rationale is that a President would pay more attention to education if its interests were articulated at the cabinet level. Thus, a Department of Education would enhance the visibility and prestige of education within the federal establishment.

But visibility and prestige for what? For greater federal outlays? Is there any reason to suppose that creation of the department

would in fact increase the amount of federal money available? And if it did, do they think for one moment that they could get more Washington money without more Washington standard-setting?

Maybe we ought to have a national standards and educational policy. The point is, you cannot create a Department of Education first and decide the question of policy and standards later.

The creation of the department is a policy decision—even if it masquerades as reorganization for bureaucratic efficiency.

We ought to keep that in mind when the proposal is taken up again, probably later this month.

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Winning questions illustrate student losses

By Michael Gibson

I was quite surprised by the number of entries I received in the mail last week for my "Ask Uncle Michael" contest, especially since I hadn't announced it yet. For next month's contest, send your questions about UNL to me, in care of this newspaper.

First prize this week, a full, four year scholarship to Harvard of the Plains University, goes to Kennie M. Soar, who writes:

"I keep having nightmares, and I need your help. I dream that I'm forced to go to a school with the second highest tuition in the conference, the second lowest average teachers' salaries, and student fees which aren't controlled by students. What can I do to keep this dream from coming true?"

Dear Kennie: Don't wake up.

Second prize, a Steinway upright piano, goes to Sigmund E. Pilson of Lincoln, who wants to know what a bonfire is.

Dear Siggie: A bonfire is the traditional manner by which UNL students display their outstanding maturity and responsibility (as well as their capacity for alcohol) by practicing their Boy Scout fire-starting skills in the middle of 16th Street. During the highly organized event, deep philosophical topics are discussed such as "Why do the Regents think we're children?"

Our third prize is a savings account in the ASUN Credit Union, and goes to Ernie K. of Omaha. Ernie says he is treasurer of a UNL organization, and wants to know where his group should open their savings account.

Dear Ernie: Student banking in the Union is not your best choice, but it's your only one according to UNL regulations.

They offer such great services as a 50 cent monthly service charge (plus 10 cents a transaction) on all savings accounts, and they have the lowest annual interest payable by law—exactly nothing.

Fourth prize: a pair of binoculars and a dollar-a-game increase in the price of his student football ticket goes to an anonymous CBA freshman, who writes:

"All those people who are unhappy that the Regents are spending money on athletics and not academics are wrong, because no tax money is being used for the new stadium addition. When I read their letters, I knew they were wrong, so I decided to check out the facts. What do you think of this?"

Dear Anonymous: I think I usually check the facts out first, and then decide if someone's wrong. Be that as it may, I think you've missed the point. It's not the tax dollars will be used to fund the stadium

addition, it's that perhaps the Regents should spend a bit more time thinking about academics instead of athletics.

Honorable Mention: from Stew Dent Body of Lincoln, who asks:

I'm a typical UNL student who's very unhappy. I spend most evenings complaining to my friends about all the problems UNL has. You see, I want to hear political speakers; I want to be able to share a drink or two with a good friend; I want to get rid of the teacher I've got whose lectures are as dry as the Gobi desert, and I want student government to have more power. But neither the Regents nor the Administration will listen to me. Why?"

Dear Stew: Maybe you're not whispering loud enough.

And finally, a confidential to R. Roskens, Lincoln: the National Weather Service knows a lot more about weather in Michigan than I do.

letters to the editor

Throughout this winter I have been telling my friends and family how pleased I am that we have such an efficient road crew in Lincoln, that they have done an excellent job getting out with the sand trucks and snow removal almost immediately. I have also mentioned repeatedly that I intended to write and tell them so. Now, after reading "Snow removal charges invalid" on page 8 of the Jan. 24 *Daily Nebraskan*, I am motivated to comment. I do believe Richard Baker's complaints are unjustified.

During December and January I have had visitors from out-of-state and they also mentioned how remarkable it was to see the streets so well taken care of as compared to Phoenix, Chicago, Sioux City, Indianapolis, or Toledo. I think our city's Public Works Roads and Street Maintenance Division deserves a world of praise for the fine job they are doing to make our mobility as easy as possible.

Effie Johnson

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