

opinion/editorial

Digging for dirt at capitol turns up 'trivial' debate over Holdrege soil

By Randy Essex

I'm not one of those journalists who digs for dirt, but I do keep an eye out. And the first subject I will deal with today is, without doubt, one of the dirtiest ever to come out of Nebraska's capitol.

Do you have a favorite kind of dirt? Probably not, but Nebraska could have a state soil soon, if a bill introduced by Aurora Sen. Maurice Kremer is passed.

LB475, which would establish Holdrege soil as the state's official soil, met with no opposition during its committee hearing last week. Kremer wants Holdrege soil to join the cottonwood tree, the meadowlark, goldenrod and blue agate as one of those things in nature recognized by the state as official.

legislature

Kremer told the committee his favorite soil is among the most productive types in the state. He added that there is no Holdrege soil in his legislative district.

Interesting tidbits of information came out during the bill's hearing. The soil is named after the place where it was first mapped in 1915. There are more than 200 kinds of soil in the state, too.

Coining words

Soil classifiers have run out of names for the constantly increasing new kinds of soil, so they have had to start coining words.

Such legislation is not without cost, according to South Sioux City Sen. John Murphy. Calling the bill needless, Murphy pointed out that it costs money to print the bill, to write it into the statutes and to advertise its public hearing.

I wonder if property value will increase for farms abundant with Holdrege soil if the bill passes? And I wonder if certain parts of the state, which lack the soil, will demand that the state ship some official soil to them?

A more serious matter to be heard by a committee this week was Murphy's Legislative Resolution 5, which would

allow the governor to appoint a new lieutenant governor should the holder of that office die or become unable to serve.

The state constitution prohibits the Legislature or the governor from filling such a vacancy.

Full-time job

Murphy said that since lieutenant governor has become a full-time job, a replacement would be needed in the event of a vacancy.

"It seems impossible that we need to enact this now because of an omission," Murphy said.

But Murphy shouldn't be too embarrassed for the state because drafters of the U.S. Constitution made the same omission with regard to the vice president.

Only after John Kennedy's assassination did Congress realize the error. Gerald Ford was the first vice president named under the 25th amendment. Nelson Rockefeller was the second.

Just think, if Congress had not spotted the error, the country would have been left without a Gerald Ford to assume the presidency when what's-his-name (I just can't type that name) resigned under pressure.

The Legislature, in addition to dealing with trivial and significant matters this week, managed to turn an apparently trivial matter into one of major significance.

Penalties

Floor debate carried over into a second day on a bill introduced by the education committee that would clarify penalties for driving a school bus that is not owned by a school district if the bus is still painted yellow and/or still equipped with a stop arm.

Education Committee Chairman Gerald Koch argued that a penalty has to be levied on the driver of such a bus, but Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers disagreed.

Chambers said the owner of the bus should be liable, not the driver. Amendments to the bill were introduced, debated and defeated, including one amendment to establish a specific color for the buses.

Included in the debate was the all-important question "Would the private owner of the bus have to paint the entire thing, or could he stay within the law by just painting a stripe around it?"

Chambers was successful in his move to send the bill back to the committee for further discussion with school officials.

Neutral Senate is big 'cop out' to constituents

The politics of talking a lot and doing very little may have reached a pinnacle at ASUN's meeting Wednesday night.

After discussion which criticized the lack of student participation in preparations for Parent's Day, scheduled later this spring, the ASUN Senate voted to delete lines of a resolution which would have backed up the rhetoric by stating ASUN would not support the event.

The deletion was made in order to avoid taking a stand, according to Sen. Bruce Kendall, who initiated the effort to strike the language from the bill.

It would seem ASUN's action runs contrary to the principles upon which it is established, the principles of representative government.

Senators are elected to take stands, to represent the thousands of students on both campuses by using the large amount of information available to them to decide what is best for the students.

If the Senate was not prepared to take a stand on the issue as Kendall maintains, the resolution could have been tabled, returned to committee or simply held until their next meeting.

First Vice President Bob Moodie was precisely on target when he said the Senate would look "rather wishy-washy" if it took no stand on this issue.

Rather than exercising prudence by not taking a stand, ASUN abrogated one of its primary responsibilities, that of acting as a representative student government.

It is hoped that such "cop-out," to use the vernacular, will not occur again. If ASUN is to be viewed as a competent, credible organization, it must be prepared to take stands on controversial issues rather than debating them and hiding behind an irresponsible shield of neutrality.

L. Kent Wolgamott

White-bodied flier reminisces over air travel torments

Some people are white-knuckle fliers. From the moment they strap themselves into their seats to the time they find their feet set firmly back on the ground, they cling to things.

The white-knuckle fliers make up the majority of people who find flying a bit hard on the nerves. Then there are the people like me.

pete mason

I'm a white-body flier. Next to me, a white-knuckle flier looks like Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Napoleon and Patton all rolled into one. I don't just grip the arms of my seat with my hands, I grip the floor with my toes and the seat in front of me with my teeth. I grip anything that's nailed down with every available appendage of my body. By the time I step off a plane I feel like I've been in an isometrics marathon.

The only thing groundless about my fear is the fact

that when I'm at the height of it, there is no ground to be seen for at least 40,000 feet.

Let us consider for a moment, the mechanics of flight. Take, for example, the 727, a medium-size commercial jet. I don't know the exact figure, but I'll wager it weighs several hundred tons. Several hundred tons!

Now come on. Who's trying to kid whom? Nothing that heavy can fly! Certainly not for very long. The way I look at it, the airlines have just had an incredible string of luck. Those things are being held up there by hope alone. Someday, somebody is going to realize that flying something that big is impossible. They're going to start dropping like stones.

I remember my last flight like it was yesterday. The stewardesses (all five of them) held me down and buckled my seatbelt. Boy, some of those stewes are strong!

Fit to be tied

The plane taxied into take-off position. My moaning was disconcerting to many of the passengers and they bitterly complained. They should have considered themselves lucky. Had the stewardesses not gagged me with my own tie, I would have been screaming.

The plane was given clearance and began its take-off. My legs stiffened with such force that my shoes flew off and sailed several seats behind me. The plane attained sufficient speed for flight and the landing gear was retracted. I ate the tie.

Usually at this point of flight I begin screaming but this time no sound came out. It's hard to scream when your heart is in your mouth. For those of you who are interested, your heart feels a lot like a soft croquette ball, with tentacles.

Thirty minutes into the flight I found myself relaxed enough to release my grip from around the neck of the fat lady in the next seat. Fortunately it took only a few minutes for the crew to revive her.

Booze blues

At 30,000 feet the stewardesses began making their rounds with the booze cart. I ordered three fifth of bourbon but was informed there was a limit of *three drinks*. I spent the next hour trying to find a doctor or a nurse on board, someone who would lend me a hypodermic syringe so I could mainline the three pitiful little bottles of Jim Beam into the large vein in my neck. I had no luck so I downed them straight.

The next hour was spent trying to keep my tongue from falling in my lap. Twice, when we hit air pockets, I nearly bit it off. The fat lady had long since regained consciousness and sat at the ready, brandishing an 11-inch hat pin upon which she promised she would skewer my internal organs upon like so much shish-kabob if I so much as blinked.

When the pilot announced we were descending to prepare for landing, I assumed the fetal position and began reciting my "landing prayer."

"Oh, Lord, oh help, oh Lordy Lordy, help, help, oh oh me, oh me, oh Lordy Lordy, help, help, help..." Pretty catchy, isn't it? I made it up myself.

I don't remember the landing. Witnesses later reported that I suddenly turned into a thick, yellow liquid and trickled out of my seat. I had to be carried off the plane in a bucket. To this day I have a hard time making a fist.

