

opinion / editorial

Student interests take in more than university issues

A letter to the editor published in Wednesday's *Daily Nebraskan* disturbs and frightens us a little. We agree completely with the author's statement that Friday's story on Regent Prokop's charges of cover-up was a good story, and was pertinent of students.

However, we take strong exception to the statement that the state law relating to the treatment of sexual sociopaths, or the state's policy on the food sales tax does not interested students, and therefore should not be printed in the *Daily Nebraskan*.

We deny the allegation that legislative coverage this semester has been insensitive to the *Daily Nebraskan's* audience, and, as readers may have guessed, are somewhat offended by that charge.

legislature

We have not covered tax law debates, although they may well be the most important issue in the Legislature. We have not covered debate on water law, although that debate may have significant impact on the future of agriculture in the state.

University issues

We have limited coverage of budget bills to university budget issues, despite the fact that the state's budget is of concern to every citizen of this state.

We ran one story on the sexual sociopath law, and one story on the food sales tax bills, despite extensive media coverage of both of those issues. We have also run one story on the death penalty, corporate farming, paper recycling, insurance for legal services and other "non-student issues."

These are people issues. Students, despite what many think, are people. Somewhere down the line, we will need legal services, we will pay property taxes, we will be concerned with corporate farming and the state's criminal code.

Why should the *Daily Nebraskan* cover the drinking age issue? We don't take classes to learn to be better drinkers, and drinking certainly is not part of our educational experience. In fact, drinking is not allowed on campus, so this is not strictly a student issue — it is a people issue.

Marijuana use

So is the therapeutic use of marijuana. So is abortion. So are speed limits.

On the other hand, the story on Regent Prokop is only one in a continuing series of stories about the university. Construction of buildings on this and other NU campuses is a university issue.

So is the overall university budget. So is collective bargaining among faculty members. So is the bill that allowed students to get financial aid money for book purchases.

The idea that this newspaper should be parochial in its coverage is frightening. "Don't leave the campus; there is a whole big, scary world out there, and we don't want anything to do with it."

Students are only one of many special interest groups. Legislative coverage has not failed in its obligation to that interest group, it has gone beyond it. But then, no one can please everyone.

Perhaps a remedy to this problem would be a change in the rules of the Legislature. To accommodate *Daily Nebraskan* readers and reporters who have a fear of the real world — or no interest in it — the Legislature should be required to discuss at least one university bill every day it meets.

That way, reporters won't have to work, or exercise editorial judgment as to what might interest students the most out of the given "non-student" issues discussed on a given day, and readers won't be able to use their student fees to read about people issues. The *Omaha World-Herald* and *Lincoln Journal* and the *Star* cover all of those people issues, but students don't get those papers for free.

Those papers also cover university issues, but they don't give those issues as big a play as the *Daily Nebraskan*. Likewise, the *Daily Nebraskan* covers some non-university issues, but does not give them as big a play as other newspapers.

We do know who our readers are. They are students, faculty members, administrators and regents. But they are also people.

Randy Emex
Rocky Strunk
L. Kent Wolgamott

Decision puts hold on presses

If the reaction of national press leaders is any indication, Wednesday was a black day for the news gatherers of America.

The Supreme Court's 6-3 decision to allow those suing for libel to probe the "editorial process" by asking such questions as "Why did you use this quote instead of another?" and "Didn't you and your editors suspect that your source was lying?" is being universally decried as a major defeat for the First Amendment.

Jack Landau, director of the Reporter's Committee for Freedom of the Press calls the decision a "major defeat... because it allows the courts to intrude into the most private thoughts and editorial discussions of journalists and news organizations."

And Allen Neuharth, chairman of the Gannett Co. and president of the American Newspaper Publishers Association said the decision "is one more step by the current court to weaken, erode and diminish freedom of the press, and by extension all First Amendment freedoms. . . ."

Neuharth also referred to last year's Stanford Daily decision in saying "Last spring, the Supreme Court ruled that police can rummage through newsrooms; today it has ruled lawyers can rummage through reporters' and editors' minds."

While we agree that the judgment in the

Herbert case Wednesday was another potentially damaging precedent, the decision itself may not be as gravely damaging as some are predicting.

For as C.L. Dancy, editor of the Peoria (Ill) Journal Star said, "normally a defendant opens that question (state of mind) himself, saying that he had good motives and no spiteful intent."

The decision will undoubtedly cause news organizations to prepare defenses for possible similar cases, just as the Stanford Daily decision has caused them to establish procedures for dealing with police searches of the newsroom.

However, it remains to be seen whether the Herbert decision will substantially change libel law and its prosecution.

More dangerous for the press is the tendency of the high court to rule against the press with increasing regularity, gradually stifling it.

For each time the press goes to the Supreme Court and loses it loses some of its aggressiveness and independence.

And if enough Stanford Daily and Herbert decisions come out of that beautiful white building across the street from the U.S. Capitol, cries of the death of the nation's free press will be obituaries rather than the warnings of today.

L. Kent Wolgamott



letters to the editor

The time has come for students at the university to speak out. Senator Ralph Kelly's bill to raise the drinking age to 21 (LB221) has been brought out of committee for debate by the entire Legislature. The passing of this bill will have serious effects on the students and the life-style here at the university.

Think of some of the consequences:

1) Hundreds of future college students will not be able to find jobs because of the bill. Positions such as bartender, cocktail waitress, even waiter and waitress in some places, will go to older people, at least 21 years old. These jobs are perfect for students because of the mostly evening hours and good pay.

2) Some form of alcohol is available to 19 and 20 year olds in all of our neighboring states. The effect of raising the drinking age will be an increase in the number of people driving to other states to purchase alcohol. Reducing the number of teen-agers in alcohol related traffic accidents is one of Senator Kelly's major concerns. Does this seem like the solution?

3) 19 and 20 year olds are legally adults. They can enter into legal contracts, marry, vote, and die in battle. Just recently they were given the right to serve on a jury. Raising the drinking age to 21 will in effect, be calling these people "second-class" citizens.

Senator Kelly and most of the other proponents of his bill agree that raising the drinking age to 21 will not solve the problem of teen-age drinking. They why take a privilege away from responsible young adults? I see this as an attempt to cover up the real reason for the problem.

When our adult population changes their attitudes towards drinking, and parents take the time to teach their children the dangers and responsibilities taken on when using alcohol, then we will begin to see a change in teen-age alcohol use. Merely raising the drinking age to 21 will have little or no effect.

The last two times this bill was introduced to the Legislature it failed. We were lucky: Student actions had little to do with the outcome. This time around things are different. LB221 is steadily gaining momentum. Without input from students, and all others opposed to the arbitrary restriction of liberties, this bill has a good chance of being made into law.

Write to your congressman, and encourage your friends and family to do the same. With a little luck, and support from the students, this bill can be defeated; but act now before it is too late.

Craig A. Johnson
Sophomore
CBA

Nestle reply

Dear Jeff Klopping,

Your attack of Sue Ellis' resolution for the ASUN's support of a boycott of Nestle products is reflective of an attitude of those who are in a social coma.

You say you are concerned with the Nestle situation, also. Sue has done something with her concern, have you?

You would like for her to have heard the Nestle side of the story before she introduced her resolution. Besides saying that "you can't drink it slow", what could anyone say that would refute the decrease in infant mortality?

Nothing personal, Jeff, but with all your compassion, you should consider being a regent sometime in the future.

Brady Wiebeck
Sophomore
Journalism

Draft concerns

With proposals and discussion about the renewal of military draft becoming increasingly frequent, it is important for young adults (male and female) to invest some time in consideration of how such a move in public policy may relate to their life and values.

The one particular area of such consideration affects those whose personal and corporate religious values would preclude either direct military service activity or cooperation with any system of government conscription or regulation for military purposes.

As a clergyman and campus minister, I encourage all young adults to give these issues careful thought, and do it now, rather than waiting until after a crisis presented by a new draft law develops. I encourage you to talk with the pastor, priest, or rabbi of your own congregation if you are so related, or to any clergy or campus minister friend. Almost any of these will welcome a chance to discuss your thoughts and concerns with you, though not always necessarily agreeing with you on issues.

The campus ministry at Commonplace-UMHE (333 N. 14th) is, as always, open to persons with these kinds of concerns. We are open to sharing discussion of them with you on a personal or group basis. Our campus ministry board (consisting of students, faculty, clergy and other persons from the community) has taken action on a policy which opens us, as an organized church body, to corporately hearing and registering in our minutes the testimony of any person who wishes to establish his or her credentials as conscientious objector to military service or cooperation with any kind of military conscription. Again, this does not involve our agreeing or disagreeing with your personal position, but rather our supporting your right and responsibility to make conscious, considered, ethical decisions. We invite and encourage inquiries about this concern. We also encourage persons who may be moving in the direction of a C.O. position to authenticate their values in actions as well as words, by active participation in peace movement groups like Nebraskans for Peace, or such programs within their own church or denomination.

If and when new national service programs come closer

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