

LB221 to be considered later

Lengthy debate fails to advance bill

By Randy Essex

Because debate extended into the noon hour Wednesday, Grand Island Sen. Ralph Kelly was not able to muster enough votes to advance his bill to raise the drinking age to 21, and was forced to abstain on his pet bill.

Kelly changed his vote from yes to not voting so he can file a motion to reconsider the Legislature's action, which failed to advance LB221 on a 22-18 vote. Three senators left the chamber for lunch, and three senators were not present all morning.

Speaker Richard Marvel of Hastings said Kelly's abstention qualified him to file the motion to reconsider, but added that the motion will not be entertained until it is placed on the daily agenda. Earlier this year, the Legislature voted to require 30 votes to change the speaker's agenda.

Two hour debate

The vote Wednesday followed two hours of debate, which saw the adoption of an amendment allowing 19 and 20 year-olds to work as waitresses and bartenders even if the bill passes. The amendment, introduced by Fremont Sen. Barry Reutzel, passed, 25-6.

Refused during the debate was a motion to indefinitely postpone the bill. Four amendments also failed.

An amendment offered by Omaha Sen. Peter Hoagland and Columbus Sen. Don Dworak would have allowed 19 and 20-

year-olds to drink in bars, but not buy package liquor to take home or elsewhere.

"This amendment is the answer," Dworak said. Through it, he added, junior high school students would not be able to obtain alcohol from 19-year-olds buying off-sale. The amendment failed 17-25.

But Reutzel, who opposes the bill, said the amendment would tell young people they are not responsible enough to drink at home while they watch Monday Night Football, but they are responsible enough to sit in a bar and drink while they watch the game.

Freed senators

Reutzel argued that more alcohol would be consumed in a bar than at home.

With the amendment's introduction, Kelly publicly freed senators who had pledged their support to the age of 21, and in fact voted for the compromise himself, until it was clear the motion was lost. He then changed to a no vote.

Bellevue Sen. Frank Lewis failed on a 17-23 vote in his motion to indefinitely postpone the bill. He said that LB221, like the Puritan doctrine of the 18th century, proposed obedience through fear.

"When you get up to the Pearly Gates, and they ask you, 'What did you do for Nebraska?' you can tell them you solved the teenage drinking problem," Lewis told supporters of the bill.

Sen. Gerald Koch of Ralston introduced a motion to kill the bill, but later Koch withdrew the motion.

Koch argued that passage of LB221 would drive young adults underground to drink. But, he said, that is where supporters of the bill want the drinking problem; "where you can't see it, so you can sleep at night."

Parent's fault

Koch said the problem is the fault of parents, who provide poor models for their children.

"We are going to deceive the people, because you don't solve difficult problems

with such simplistic solutions," Koch said.

But South Sioux City Sen. J.R. Murphy said that because the state has forced both parents out of their home in order to pay taxes and live, the responsibility for teenage drinking comes back to the Legislature.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers agreed with Koch that parents and adults in general are poor models, but supported the bill.

Saying liquor is one of the worst problems society has to contend with, Chambers argued that public policy should not encourage this evil.

"I can see why Communists look at this as a decadent society when (opponents of LB221) fight tooth and nail to give youth those things that destroy them," Chambers said.

He added that preachers, politicians, judges, teachers, coaches, mothers and "babies" drink, and said just because alcohol is widely used, there is no reason it should continue to be used.

Stronger people

"Communist countries don't do this thing, and as a result they have stronger people," Chambers said.

Lincoln Sen. Steve Fowler said he heard three arguments for the bill that were not logical. Sen. Murphy, Fowler said, contended that if the Murphy's of America stayed home there would not be a teen drinking problem.

Chambers, Fowler said, contended that if we had a more totalitarian regime, there would not be a teen drinking problem. And Kelly, Fowler said, argued that if 19 and 20-year-olds are not allowed to drink there would not be a problem.

All LB221 proposes to do is provide a convenient scapegoat for the problem in 19 and 20-year-olds, Fowler concluded.

Omaha Sen. Neil Simon introduced an

amendment that would have required all establishments selling alcohol to have a breath tester available for customers to use. The Simon amendment failed, 7-20.

Opposed plan

Simon said that Kelly was not opposed to the idea, but Kelly did not vote on the amendment. Simon also said tavern owners were not opposed to the plan, but Michael Moriarty, lobbyist for several Omaha bar owners, said that "wasn't quite true."

Omaha Sen. Dave Newell proposed to exclude people in the armed services from the bill, so those people could have a drink in Nebraska bars when they were home on leave. The idea failed, 8-18. Kelly did not vote on the Newell amendment either.

Another amendment, offered by Chambers, would have changed the drinking age to 10. Chambers did not vote on the proposal, but Sen. Don Wesely of Lincoln, Orval Keyes of Springfield and Koch did. It failed, 3-20.

Chambers argued that in most other countries there is no drinking age, and there is not a great teenage drinking problem. He said if opponents of the bill really believed parents should be responsible, then they should support his amendment.

After the vote, Kelly said one amendment he will have a hard time fighting is a plan to allow 19-year-olds to drink 3.2 beer, and 21-year-olds to drink other kinds of alcohol.

He said the amendment will be offered on select file, if the bill is advanced from its present stage.

Kelly appears to have enough votes to advance the measure, if the entire body were to vote on the matter. Of the six senators not voting Wednesday, Nelson Merz of Falls City, Rex Haberman of Imperial and Robert Clark of Sidney appear to be in Kelly's camp.

Turkey incident sparks citations

Three UNL football players have been cited to appear in Lancaster County Court May 1 in connection with Friday's early morning bonfire at 16th and R streets.

The students were cited for cruelty to animals, a misdemeanor offense punishable by six months in jail and/or a \$500 fine, according to Paul Jacobsen, UNL police investigator.

Six live turkeys were thrown into the fire. Only two lived, but one was so badly burned it had to be destroyed.

The students were identified as Mark Goodspeed, 22, 1612 C St., Apt. 1; Daniel Hurley, 20, 435 N. 25th St. and Derrie Nelson, 21, 922 C St., Apt. 1. Goodspeed is an offensive tackle, Nelson is a defensive end and Hurley is a defensive middle guard.

One student is a member of a fraternity, according to Jacobsen.

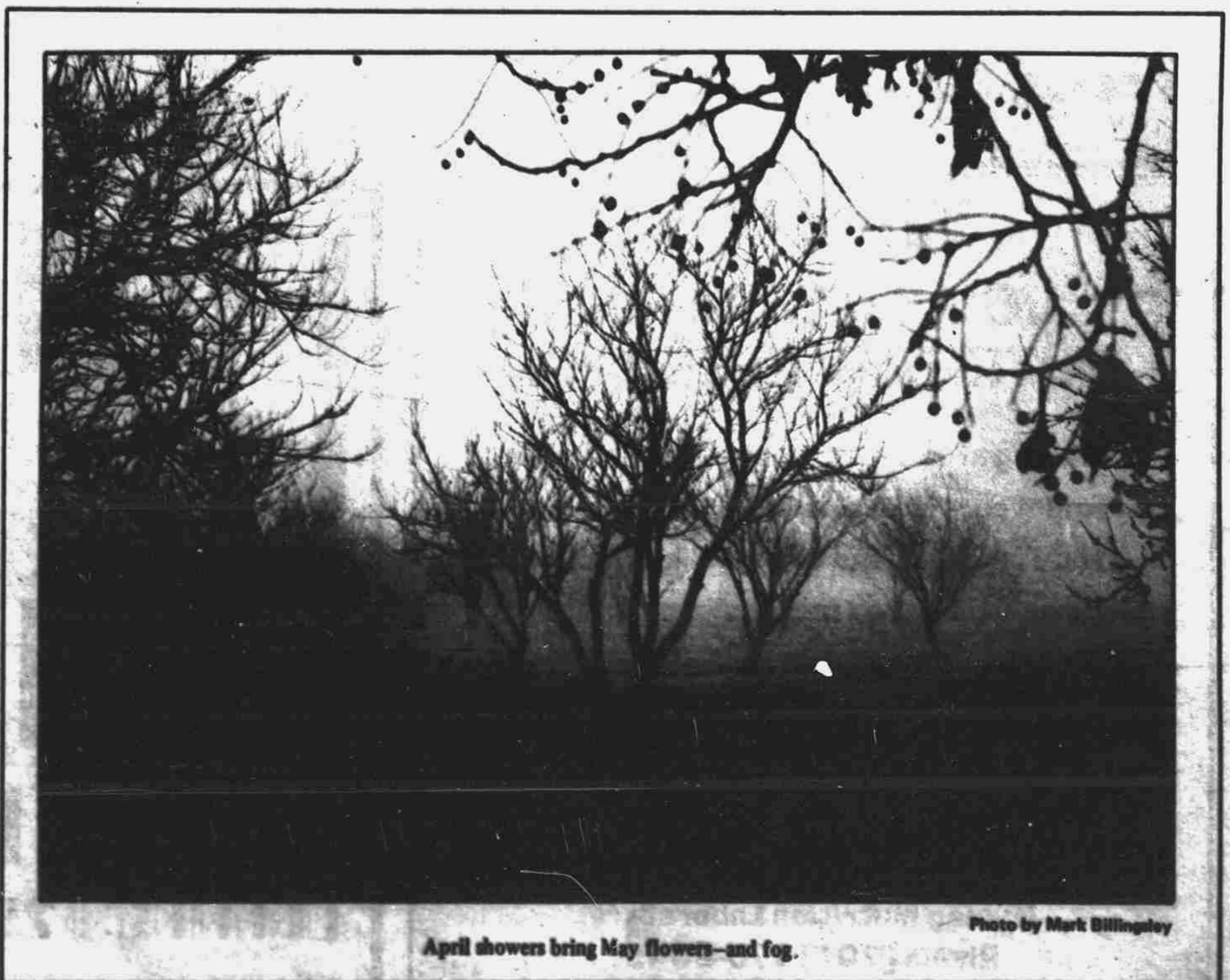
Coach Tom Osborne said the team has been "disciplined on the football field" but that he will not take any action until the court case is finalized.

Osborne said he understood that there were more than three students involved in the situation but because the football players are "more visible" and around an "explosive situation" they were easily identified.

Osborne said he is concerned and "hoped they would be treated fairly."

inside thursday

Clang, clang, clang went the trolley:
Today's bicyclers ride along old
Lincoln trolley linespage 6
Sue Ellen is in town: Linda Gray of
TV's "Dallas" visits Lincoln page 8
Des Moines, here we come: The
Men's track team heads for Drake
Relayspage 10



April showers bring May flowers—and fog.

Photo by Mark Billingsley