

opinion/editorial

Open, public criminal trials should be law of the land

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case in which the court may again attempt to settle the question of whether judges may bar the public and the press from criminal trials.

The case selected by the Court is from Virginia where a judge excluded the public and press from a murder trial. The judge acted on a state law that gives a jurist discretion to bar anyone from the court provided the rights of the defendant are not violated.

The order excluding the public and press, when challenged by newspapers, was upheld by the Virginia Supreme Court. That court referred to the July U.S. Supreme Court decision stating that judges

could close pretrial hearings if the defendant did not object.

The July case involved, specifically, a New York pretrial hearing, but the wording in Justice Potter Stewart's majority opinion made it seem to apply to trials as well.

"... We hold that members of the public have no constitutional right...to attend criminal trials," he said.

Confusion resulted from the case when other members of the high court, split 5-4 in the decision, disagreed in a series of public statements.

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger said it applied only to the pretrial proceedings. But Justice Harry A. Blackman said Burger was wrong.

Since that July ruling, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press has reported more than 50 cases in which judges have closed or tried to court proceedings. Some of those cases involved trials.

This increasing number of closed criminal proceedings is indeed frightening. Precedents are being set for massive denials of the public's right to know what its judicial system is doing.

And the public does need to know. Public trials are guaranteed by the First (free speech and press) and Sixth (fair trial) amendments so that, among other things, our judicial system is never allowed to return to the time when the rules favored the rich over the poor, when the

defendant was tried without knowing of the charges against him, when innocent people were jailed and guilty were set free.

Nebraska residents in recent weeks have been given first-hand evidence that the open trials are vitally necessary. By knowing exactly what happened in the Erwin Charles Simants trial the impetus has been given for the development of a guilty by reason of insanity verdict and for an overhaul of Nebraska's entire criminal justice system.

This is good and Nebraskans will benefit from it. The country will benefit as well if the U.S. Supreme Court, when considering this latest case, makes it clear once and for all that public trials are the law of the land.

letters

In a recent letter it was noticed how modern day psychics and Biblical prophecies are predicting upcoming economic chaos and starvation in the USA. The letter continued that we should feel a little uneasy about it.

Has anyone felt uneasy about the 60 million murdered during the Chinese Civil War (Cultural Revolution) or how about the 40 million as a consequence of the Soviet Union, exterminated by starvation and slaughter?

How many people are talking about our responsibilities as a "God fearing, in God we trust" society? This brings to my mind the Biblical story about Jonah's prophecy.

God told the people their city was going to be destroyed because of their wicked ways. The people repented for their sinful ways, changed their hearts, then God's prophecy was reversed, the city was not destroyed.

Let's stop being so nearsighted, or self centered and change ourselves, considering our responsibilities towards the future. Are we going to let circumstances bury us of our hope to accomplish a better world?

Consider, if God is alive and is our common parent, He can help us in the struggle for freedom and justice for all. It was God who inspired our founding fathers (and mothers) to conceive of our God centered democracy.

Let's not abandon the mission we have inherited from the past. Our ancestors sacrificed their blood, sweat and tears so the next generation could have a better life. I fear that many people feel that during this crucial time in history we can sit back and things will take care of themselves.

What about the thousand Cuban school teachers, beginning to teach youngsters in Nicaragua, Nov. 1? What ideals will those children have 10 years from now?

Atheistic, idealist young doctors and engineers and teachers working for \$30 a month, in a country not even their own. Do we as Americans have that dedication to the development of the world? We have the best of everything except the sacrificial spirit that got this country where it is today.

Americans, we must return to the sacrificial spirit of giving, on an international level, only then can we face and overcome the challenges facing us today.

John Raineri
C.A.R.P. Director
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Pro-education

Mr. Schwartzkopf:

As you have said that the regents have no information other than what they see in the student paper about the libraries shorter hours (Daily Nebraskan Oct. 25) and since friends have said their personal letters to regents are not always answered, I thought you might enjoy a bit of enlightenment from a student in that student newspaper. In regards to the article let me quickly begin by agreeing with your views on ACT-SAT selective admissions as stated.

Now, if the regents should listen equally to student and administration proposals as you state, I assume you believe our positions are relatively equal or at least that are proposals are equally valid. If this is so, will you tell our administration not to bring their petitions or anything else before the Board of Regents that we the students don't favor, won't you? We wouldn't want to be responsible for having to follow a policy we have no voice in, especially if our administration has a voice in ours. If harmony in policy making and implementation is a goal, then give us all rights to consultation so freely given to our administration. If not, do not hamstring our freedom of action by asking us to respect the administration's view if we are in turn not allowed to have our views command their equal respect.

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Sweet revenge is a pie in the eye

After the phenomenal success of *Animal House* last year, *Newsweek* ran a story on college humor.

The story said in part because of *Animal House*, college humor was making a tremendous comeback. I found this hard to believe because I didn't know it had faded away.

The article went on to say that the raucous college pranks of days gone by had vanished. But *Animal House* changed that.

tom prentiss

Last Wednesday night, there was a prank so humorous, so typically collegiate, that it deserves to be shared with others. But first some background is necessary.

If you read the personals, you might have seen the ad for Pie Head Inc. The purpose of this group was to hit people in the face with pie for a fee. Usually \$3.

They would usually travel in twos or threes and sometimes would wear trenchcoats to add to their mystique. To set up a "hit", all that needed to be done was to call and give the information on who was to be hit and pay cash in advance.

I don't know how busy their business was, but for a friend of mine they were too busy.

HE GOT NAILED with a pie on two separate occasions. He thought it was funny, yet he was a little mad. He decided not to vent his mad feelings. But, he did decide to get even.

What ensued was the greatest con job since *The Sting*. My friend who was hit with the pies called in a hit for his roommate. But, his roommate was not the real target. The guys throwing the pies were.

He figured if he could get them up to the hallway of 7200 Selleck, it would be possible to ambush them and gain some humorous revenge.

The hit was targeted for last Wednesday night at 10:30.

Wednesday dawned right and early like all dawns should and throughout the day anticipation for the Pearl Harbor-like attack grew.

That night around 8, the man in charge of the attack, whose name must be kept secret for national security reasons, began organizing the troops.

"THIS IS A one shot deal. These guys are coming into the trap and we can't afford to mess up," he said.

At 10 p.m., the floor was quiet. At 10:10 p.m. a stereo was turned on to make it sound more like the noisy floor it is. At 10:20 p.m. all waited in their respective "fox-holes" for the signal.

And promptly at 10:30 p.m., the bad guys arrived.

When they knocked on the assigned door, the Commander, who had stationed himself in the hallway, attempted to push the pies back into the intruder's face and yelled for the others.

Seven or eight guys armed with whipped cream and shaving cream pies spilled out of the south bathroom effectively closing the closet exit, the south stairway.

Five or six guys charged out of the television lounge, which blocked off the passage to the north. Trapped in a no man's land, the two Pie Headers were pummeled with pies.

OTHER FLOOR MEMBERS emerged from their rooms and tossed pies.

The attack lasted no longer than 20 seconds. Yet, in that time the pies from the guys on 7200 had smothered the guys from Pie Head and probably broadened their knowledge of the phrase "equal time."

The hallway looked like a Cool Whip factory that went BOOM.

They resembled the Pittsburgh Pirates after winning the World Series. All that was missing was a stereo blaring Sister Sledge's "We Are Family."

As a crowd gathered to watch clean up efforts, I was glad college humor was "back." It helps keep us humor columnists busy.