

opinion/editorial

Decision to reduce Nebraska Unions' hours reasonable

The decision Wednesday night by the Union Board to reduce the operating hours of both the Nebraska and East Unions was a wise move.

In an effort to offset a utility debt for this fiscal year, the board decided that the Nebraska Union should close at 11:30 p.m. instead of midnight Friday and Saturday and will open at 9 a.m. instead of 8 a.m. on non-football Saturdays. The East Union will close at 10:30 p.m.

instead of 11 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday and at 11 p.m. instead of midnight on Friday and Saturday.

There are bound to be some students, who, burdened with tuition increases will feel students in general are being walked on, but it is unlikely that very many students will actually be affected by the reduced hours.

The Nebraska Unions on non-football Saturday mornings has the

atmosphere of an indoor graveyard and the situation is not much better in the late evenings.

It should be clear that the union decision cannot be compared to the debate earlier this semester about the proposal to close the libraries. The need for quiet study space is vital for any university, and that need should be met regardless of cost.

The unions however provide a different function at those hours—generally one of entertainment. It is

unlikely that the half hour or hour reductions will drastically affect student's lives in that respect. Entertainment alternatives to the union are available in the campus and downtown community.

The amount of money the reductions will save is indeed small—only about \$1,000—and for a university with a budget of millions of dollars, that may seem insignificant. But in a time of a budget and energy crises, keeping the union open for a small number of students seems to make little sense.

Ads entertaining violations aren't

Big Oil better than Crooked Oil

WASHINGTON—A massive oil slick washed over the pages of several of the nation's larger newspapers earlier this month. The Mobil Corporation took two full page ads—bombast in one, bluster in the other—to attack CBS Television for its reporting of the oil company's third quarter profit increase of 131 percent.

colman mccarthy

Without the noted troubleshooter Red Adair jetting in to cap this blowout of Mobile press, readers were on their own. They were like beached seagulls trying to survive a gooey blackening, except that in the newspapers it was globs of snake oil, not tanker oil, that had to be stepped over.

The nimble who did step well had a reward: A few pages on they had a glimpse of Mobil in the objective world, not the contrived one of its propaganda ads. The same day the company whined that it was shafted by CBS, news stories told of Mobil's own art of shaftery, for which Mobil had agreed to pay \$19 million in refunds and penalties.

The settlement responded to the Federal Emergency Regulatory Commission's accusations that Mobil violated natural gas regulations. A refund of \$18.5 million would go to two pipeline companies, (in alleged overcharges) and \$500,000 in civil penalties, the Washington Post reported.

THAT'S A PITY for Mobil. But it's even harder on me. Every time I ease back and enjoy Mobil for what it does best—produce weekly propaganda ads that have become comic parodies of the business line—the company gets caught at something decidedly uncomic.

I prefer Big Oil when it isn't Crooked Oil, when Mobil, and its pompous and clownish ad campaign, remains at the level of the laughably predictable. For a decade, Mobil ads have been a weekly fixture in major American newspapers and magazines.

The surest way to extract the comedy in the Mobil ads is to treat them as mirthful material for a parlor game. Take eight people, four on this side of the cheese dip, four on the other. One team reads aloud the first sentences of a Mobil ad. The opposing team huddles and has five minutes to come up with a closing paragraph. The winning team is the one whose prose is closest to the cliches and fatuity in the actual ad.



Cartoon by John Lynch, associate professor of life sciences

SHOULD DULLNESS set in, a variation exists. Select one of Mobil's Lofty Vision ads in which God, Motherhood and Offshore Drilling are hailed. The object is to guess the eminent thinker that has been cited. Two points for Churchill, five points for Samuel Butler, 1,000 for Ludwig von Mises.

Only one house-rule needs to be strictly applied: automatic expulsion for everyone who tries to begin a discussion of the ads' content. The merriment is precisely because they lack intellectual content. If getting us to think is the goal of Mobil, it would do better merely to tout its oil the way we used to hear of Gulf's "No-Nox gasoline" or Shell "with platformate."

The old bunk had no pretensions. Buy our gas, we want your money. The new bunk of Mobil says the opposite: Buy our viewpoint, we want your mind.

Mobil's propaganda-blab doesn't deserve the gift of a serious dialogue. Mobil is no more than just another oil company. Its ideals are stale, shallow or self-serving. When a genuine issue arises—the \$19 million settlement, for one—Mobil is silent. Its ad the following week was on the glories of its Lord Mountbatten TV show.

Perhaps it was glorious. But it was nothing next to the gaiety of a Mobil ad parlor game.

(c) 1979, The Washington Post Company

Ombudsman likes lull in the storm

It would appear (at the time of this writing) that there won't be any major tragedies in the paper this week. At least in practice, the predominant feelings leaking out of my office are ones of benign neglect. Nobody is finding anything that is sufficiently annoying to warrant a major confrontation. Energy is short on the personal front, nobody is moving unless they have to. People are cold outside and inside, and it doesn't look like much will change that.

ombudsman

I'm sure there is a similar lull at the complaint window at Macy's. It's the pre-complaint season. The man with the greased hair and the pencil-thin mustache leans on one elbow behind the counter and brushes the lint off the artificial carnation in his lapel. He surveys the clientele with a bored "what's your problem?" look. Mentally he promises to slowly chew the head off the first person who so much as looks at him from the corner of his eye.

So much for generating any sympathy for a defective personal massager, pop-corn rotor toaster.

Well, such is life when you make your money from other peoples' miseries. Evidently, complaints are addictive. Unlike the Macy's man (barring grease, pencil-thin mustache and lint), I think I appreciate the function of the complaint window mentality. Nothing is everything. "Zen and the art of screaming." Or (as it more generally is) "Zen and the art of explaining, rehashing, agreeing, disagreeing, spinning, and getting dizzy."

This relative calm is unsettling. If I were inclined to complain about it, I'm not sure where I would go. I could talk to myself, but find that terribly unproductive. We seldom agree. I could talk to somebody else, but I've forgotten how.

Maybe, I should let well enough alone. I would not mind coasting through the rest of the semester without any major problems. I'm sure that many people feel that way right now. Somebody has just called a well-placed time-out. Although I'm always ready to play, I find that nice.

The Ombudsman's window is open, but a little cloudy. I keep expecting it to clear up any minute, but I'm not holding my breath.

Manufacturers concentrate on teen cosmetic business

BOSTON—As an unappointed culture watcher, I have often given thanks and footnotes to assorted Madison Ave. copy-writers for magazines.

ellen goodman

One of them, after all, gave birth to the Cosmo Girl, that marvelous creature of the Swinging Seventies whose I.Q. is on par with her cleavage. Another completed the renovation of Playboy into the charming egocentric of the Me Decade—"elbowing his way in, saying I want it all."

So, just imagine how excited I was to see the following announcement spread across the back page of the New York Times last week by Seventeen magazine:

"IN 1926, FREUD ASKED, 'WHAT DO WOMEN WANT? IN 1979, WE FOUND OUT.'"

Aha! I thought, out of the bible of adolescence would come The Answer. Next to this mystery, the shroud of Turin, the quest for the photovoltaic cell and the meaning of life have all paled. Herein might dwell the youthful role model of the 1980s.

Thus, atwitter with excitement, I sat down to read. What secrets of raging hormonal imbalance would the ad people unlock? What, in short, do women want?

Mascara.
Nail polish.
Bath soap.

ACCORDING TO the fine and not so fine print, Dr. Freud had been stumped by the question of what women wanted out of

life. But Seventeen, in a flash of inspiration, had hired Dr. Yankelovich to discover what they wanted out of products.

Heading not to the couch but the poll, they determined that: "an impressive number of women want the same things from their products that they wanted when they were young."

The message was simply that if you grab them while they're virtually virgin consumers, they'll be loyal to you forever. Or at least to your nail polish.

In short, as proud-as-punch ad director Robert Bunge put it on the phone, "We here at Seventeen always say it's easier to start a habit than stop it."

Well, talk about your Freudian slips. The teen advertisers are in the business of starting a habit all right. The habit of self-loathing. If their manufacturers are selling solutions, they have to produce the need.

They raise the Gross National Level of teen-age insecurity and then offer the cure. By 15, the average teen-age girl is hooked on cosmetics and absolutely mainlining shampoo.

Teen-agers have been easy prey since the days when they saved up money for freckle-remover cream. But today they are an astonishingly big market, dubbed Super-spenders. They spend \$2.1 billion on beauty aids, and \$12.8 billion on clothes.

A QUICK LOOK at the magazine itself (and this is the best in the market) will tell you why. They're enough to make Freud redefine anxiety. Teen-agers are defined as tragically and physically flawed people who must stop the greasies, turn their lips into a work of art, take their faces to Maxi, and wonder "If you shampooed yesterday will he do this (snuggle) today?"

Continued on Page 5