

opinion/editorial

Society needs to recognize disease

It's a simple matter when someone has a disease. He or she goes to a professional who diagnoses the symptoms and prescribes proper treatment.

In the case of alcoholism, however, neither the alcoholic nor society wants to admit there really is a problem.

Society's failure to recognize alcoholism as a disease is summed up best in a recent statement by Lincoln City Councilwoman Donna Frohardt.

Her philosophy is that "alcoholics should pay for their own treatment. If they give up their booze, they'll have plenty of money to pay for treatment."

It is that kind of sad misinterpretation of a very real problem that

has added to the alcoholic's dilemma in society.

Alcoholism touches more than just the 80,000 Nebraska alcoholics and their families. In fact, it is estimated that Nebraskans pay more than \$350 million annually in alcohol-related work losses and health and welfare payments.

Take into consideration that 51 percent of the state probation caseload involves driving-while-intoxicated convictions, and it's obvious that alcohol is more than a problem—it's a very real disease.

But a legislative bill introduced by Omaha Sen. Ray Powers addresses alcohol as a disease and has gained support despite opposition from the powerful insurance industry.

Powers' LB646 would require all group insurance policies in Nebraska to include provisions for alcoholic treatment.

Nebraska insurance companies have decided to thumb their noses at the 80,000 alcoholics in this state and have thrown up weak arguments against mandated insurance coverage. Let's hope lawmakers can see through that lobbying effect to a real approach to the alcohol problem.

Group insurance coverage for alcoholism was successful in California and insurance rates increased only 3.5 cents per individual per month. Minnesota, Ohio and New Jersey have enacted similar bills without any apparent increase in premiums.

By treating alcoholism correctly from the beginning and eliminating alcohol-related hospital visits and emergency care, insurance companies might even save from what they are now paying out.

Mandated alcoholism coverage would save Nebraskans money because the treatment of alcohol-related symptoms already is costing millions while the cause—alcoholism—is being ignored.

Convincing an alcoholic he or she has a problem is one of the most important steps toward treatment. Getting society to admit alcoholism is a disease requiring attention is the best way of dealing with the situation.

Harry Allen Strunk



HELLO AGAIN... SAY, I HATE BEING AN INDIAN GIVER, BUT GOLD JUST PASSED \$650 AN OUNCE...

Baker shows true form in GOP nomination race

AUGUSTA, Maine—There were about 320 diners at the Maine Republican Party's \$20-a-head dinner in the Augusta Civic Center, and about 6,000 empty seats in the stands surrounding them.

david broder

The setting—the half-filled floor, the yawning stands—was discomfiting enough. The invocation was a little strange, a presumably humorous prayer to "free us from our Georgian bondage." The program had been rearranged to accommodate the schedule of the visiting speaker, so Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr., was called on to deliver the address while the party faithfully sat staring, a bit hungrily, at the salad bowls, the plastic containers of dressing, and the pie that would, in time, be their dessert.

All of those unsettling elements must have gotten to Howard Baker, for he suddenly heard himself saying: "I am 5 feet, 7 inches tall, have green hair and brown eyes, and . . . you'll just have to take me as I am."

When Howard Baker reaches the point that he declares himself The Boy with Green Hair, you can be sure that something weird has happened. But that is the way it is as the Senate Republican leader carries on his erratic pursuit of the GOP presidential nomination.

Of all the campaigns in this year, none

has so squandered the talents of its principal as that of the senior senator from Tennessee. The Howard Baker that Washington knows is a capable legislator, a skillful leader of his party, a man with a grasp of issues and a talent for articulating them—and a man of considerable charm, besides. The man on the stump in this presidential campaign is a double who invites ridicule.

Occasionally, Baker shows his true form. His characterization of President Carter's State of the Union speech as "a full-scale attack on the Carterism of the last three years" is a neat partisan shot and drew applause here and in New Hampshire. But, from the beginning, Baker's campaign has been characterized by organizational ineptitude and missed opportunities. Those problems continue.

Baker had been sent off to the dismal event in Maine on a night when he had a longstanding commitment to address a dinner of Maryland Republicans. Maryland is natural Baker country—a neighboring state with a long tradition of supporting Baker's brand of moderate Republicanism.

By canceling the date in Maryland, Baker earned a widely publicized attack from the state's GOP chairman and clouded his prospects of gaining his support. The visit to Maine did nothing but revive memories of Baker's unexpected humiliation at George Bush's hands in the Maine convention last fall. Since then, Bush has consolidated his support here, and Baker did nothing to recoup by his performance the other night.

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letters to the editor

Wednesday, Jan. 30, I went to the Lady Husker vs. the Lady Mavs basketball game. After an overtime game (UNL 62, UNO 65) Diane Delvigna was given an award for something but I couldn't hear what, because the men's team came out on the floor and the band started to play. The band was warming up during the women's game but I guess they can only play tunes for the men.

Why give an award if you don't want people to hear what it is? Wasn't breaking the all-time scoring record something to be proud of? After such a show of respect, I couldn't have watched the men's game. I have never seen people act so rudely.

Sherri Haeffner
Freshman
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World crises increase nervousness, pessimism

In a thousand late-show movies, there is a scene when the ship is going to sink, the plane's engines are conking out or 1,000 Indians are on a ridge looking down at the wagon train.

jerry fairbanks

The tall, good-looking hero strides into the middle of the nervous crowd and says, "No need to panic!"

Unfortunately, we have no leading man. There's no one whose word will calm us, no one who can reassure the population that the future might turn out all right.

One reason for this is that crises are politically useful. President Carter's popularity has skyrocketed since the Ayatollah Khomeini decided he was Pancho Villa and Carter became our guard against the forces of insanity and anarchy.

Congressmen find it easier to be profound by making preachments about the defense of the nation than the defense of public privilege for private corporations.

The military benefits, appearing necessary and not an expensive necessary evil. The highly technological toys that are the prizes in the intra-service bureaucratic skirmishing are questioned less, the price tags glossed over more, and the Rube Goldberg schemes sound nearly reasonable.

A state of nervousness about what happens beyond our borders also makes our world view less complex, less confusing.

Our relations with other nations also become simplified. The fact that "some banana dictator is a son of a bitch" becomes once again less important than the fact that he is our son of a bitch. Our doubts about the long-term effects of using power are swept away in the imperative to use power.

All of this is unfortunate to the ongoing search for the best for the most. Recently the government has been trying to make some kind of restitution for past mistakes, most notably by cutting off military aid to the U.S.-planted military regime in Chile.

A growing movement to treat smaller nations with some kind of respect is also slowly slipping away. The mindset necessary for seeing a population of human

beings rather than a strategic location or so many warm bodies to throw into the balance of terror is becoming disreputable, perhaps never to return.

Part of this is an aspect of the general pessimism blowing in the wind. The idea that there are limits implicitly states that those limits will mean the end of civilization as we know it.

It is becoming fashionable to predict that Western technological civilization is a passing phenomena, which will perhaps fall apart in our lifetimes.

And part of it is a general forgetfulness about the way crises work. Most crises end with a whimper, not a bang, quietly petering out when the zanies responsible get bored with what they're doing and move on.

If someone doesn't pull the trigger, if the governor doesn't send in the state police or the president doesn't send in the Marines, drab little men hold quiet conversations and both sides pull back.

Gauntlets thrown in the heat of verbal battle are left lying and everyone walks away mumbling about the "moral victories" they've just won.

And a pile of pointless words beats a pile of bodies any day.