

opinion/editorial

Freedom of choice sometimes ignored

The Legislature's Judiciary Committee hears testimony today on a bill that would permit therapeutic use of marijuana in Nebraska.

Provisions in the bill would permit doctors to prescribe the drug to patients suffering from side-effects of chemotherapy treatment or from glaucoma. The measure would strictly regulate and monitor the drug's proposed legal use, and propose research to further study the effects of marijuana — both in a general and medical sense.

The most important result of the bill would be that passage would give cancer and glaucoma patients the choice to use a drug that has been proven to benefit such patients. The bill does not mandate that a doctor prescribe the drug, nor does it require that a patient use the drug involuntarily.

The Therapeutic Research Act is a freedom of choice measure, based soundly on medical studies from a variety of sources.

Ironically, the strongest opponents of the bill can be expected to be the same senators who argued for the legalization of Laetrile on the basis of freedom of choice.

It is strange, and in fact inexplicable, that those senators can argue for freedom of choice if it is helpful in getting their bill passed, and then deny the issue when a bill is introduced that they do not like.

Such a mentality sadly complicates the effort of Neligh Sen. John DeCamp and other supporters of the Therapeutic Research Act to pass a humane bill.

Omaha Sen. Patrick Venditte, who sponsored the Laetrile bill and argued for its passage on the basis of freedom of choice in cancer treatment, is one such confused senator.

Venditte apparently thinks that passage of DeCamp's bill will somehow put marijuana into the hands, lungs and minds of junior high and grade school students.

Venditte, quite justifiably, fights efforts to reduce penalties for possession of marijuana on the premise that lax laws will lead to more corruption of youth.

However, DeCamp's bill is not, by any stretch of the imagination, an attempt to reduce, relax or even change the state's criminal and non-criminal penalties for recreational possession of marijuana.

It is an attempt to provide people such as Alma Emry the dignity of living comfortably in adverse circumstances.

Mrs. Emry was a chemotherapy patient. She wanted to try marijuana, because she heard that it would reduce her nausea, her body pain and enable her to eat and sleep comfortably. She contacted DeCamp's office last spring, asking that the state permit her to use marijuana.

DeCamp had planned to introduce an amendment to Venditte's Laetrile bill, but Venditte would not hear of

it, and Mrs. Emry did not get her wish. Her husband of 30 years even bought some marijuana illegally, so strong was the Emry's belief that the drug would help.

Mrs. Emry never used the drug. She died shortly after her husband bought it.

Her last months would have been less painful and degrading had the Legislature passed DeCamp's amendment.

Laetrile supporters found their martyr in Chad Green, whose parents had to go to Mexico to get the apricot derivative for their son.

Hopefully, after two sad deaths, the Legislature will realize that it has an obligation to future Alva Emrys and Chad Greens. Hopefully, individuals like Sen. Venditte will practice what they preach, and permit freedom of choice when it is reasonable.

Certainly, it is the least that can be done for terminal cancer patients.

Randy Essex

Increased gasoline prices are seeds of social change

Most people take the price of gasoline as a personal insult. Paying \$1.10 and more per gallon sets more teeth on edge than *The Gong Show* and blows the winds of discontent over our fair land. Beneath the demagoguery public relations and just plain bitching, there lie the seeds of social change.

The widely accepted and most likely explanation for the high prices is the world-wide petroleum shortage. There are two explanations for this. One is that the industrial nations of the world have greedily overexpanded the earth's ability to supply all of its demands. The other is a belief that

ate enough to be stuck with enforcing the rules. The gas rationing laws will be as effective and have the same repute as the marijuana statutes.

Utility consumption

Utilities are another area where savings can be effected. However, several years ago the citizens of Oregon led the Union and cut their utility consumption by 10 percent. The utility companies of that state then applied for a rate increase because of a loss in revenues.

The rising cost of petroleum products is a hot issue because it is a threat to an economic state the majority of Americans have become accustomed to since the end of World War II. The major thought in economics has been, until the latter half of the 20th Century, based on the assumption that the majority was poor and always would be, and the best a society could hope for was avoiding mass starvation.

Then came Keynes and the end of the gold standard. Wealth became more available and the trade unions made sure the workers got a share. The creation of a "bourgeois proletariat" got the auto industry flying, spawned an impressive array of consumer goods and advertising for them, and put the Democrats firmly in control of Congress. Now, one of the supports of that affluence—cheap energy—is threatening to collapse and take the structure with it.

If this is true, we all face learning how to gather acorns and hunt deer. Or, we can muddle through with whatever fills the breach. Despite the rantings of the fundamentalists and other apocalypse-mongers, the latter choice is the future.

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All submissions are subject to editing and condensation and cannot be returned to the writer.

Material should be typed if possible and submitted with the writer's name, class standing, academic major or occupation, address and phone number.

Mail or deliver letters to the Daily Nebraskan, Room 34, Nebraska Union, Lincoln, Neb. 68588.

Jerry Fairbanks

OPEC, the major oil companies or "someone else" is withholding supplies from the market to drive up prices.

There is support for both theories. Oil exploration is going on in the most unlikely places. No place on earth is safe from a derrick. On the other hand, OPEC follows monopolistic oil-pricing policies and the major oil companies are making more profit than at any time in history.

"Someone else"

The solutions proposed to the "someone else" theory include nationalizing American oil companies, windfall profit taxation and imperialistic war. None has much chance of finding a majority of champions but the second, and that idea is floundering in a flood of lobbying in Congress. So the only way out for the government and the people seem to be acting on the "greed" theory, whether it is reality or not.

The ideas proposed for conserving energy are all somewhat radical. The most publicized is a heavy tax on gasoline, 50 cents a gallon being the number currently thrown around.

If and when such a levy is imposed, the consumption of gasoline will almost certainly plummet like a Messerschmitt in a WWII newsreel. Refineries can be geared toward producing heating oil, diesel fuel and other products less quickly consumed than gasoline. And the howling will be deafening.

The poor man's alternative is gas rationing. Besides the money, time and effort needed to set up the necessary structure for handing out the coupons, the market in counterfeit and stolen coupons will be another headache for whoever is unfortun-



letters to the editor

What was a very nice reception and ceremony for the upgrade of KUCV-FM's power (12 watts to over 18,000 watts), at Governor Thone's office was marred by the governor's emphatic statement that "the National Public Radio will receive a resounding veto", if it ever crosses his desk. The governor added that "there is already adequate radio service for citizens of Nebraska."

I don't think that the governor realizes that many of the supporters of KUCV-FM, a non-profit station controlled by a religious institution, are heartily in support of allowing National Public Radio a listening in Nebraska. The governor's choice of timing of reminding us of his hard stand against public radio left a bad taste in my mouth.

I am very much a supporter of KUCV Fine Arts Radio and have proved that by adopting an hour of broadcast per day for a year, which is a donation of \$12 per hour. Yet I continue as a supporter of the public radio bill and in support of citizens who are fighting for it.

As I write this letter, KUCV-FM never went on the air this morning. The station's short flight with higher power was nice and quite adequate for Lincoln and the surrounding area. I am extremely happy about the increased power, because we can now receive KUCV anywhere around town on

our car radios.

The KUCV station's increased power was due to the gift of local Lincoln radio station KFOR's Dick Chapin. Indeed Mr. Chapin got a real handsome tax write-off for the equipment that is the shedded KFOR transmitter. An interesting twist is that the commercial broadcaster, Chapin is a militant anti-National Public Radio buff who thought he was diluting the blend of interest in NPR by donating his gift. As an extra "bonus", he got a good tax write-off for his disgraced junk.

Mr. Dick Chapin has attended legislative hearings on NPR as full force against Public Radio, as he is the owner of quite a few commercial stations. He is on record at one of the hearings—replying to a question of whether he had ever listened to a NPR broadcast. He replied that he had not.

A lot of us are real happy with KUCV-FM and are grateful to the Seventh Day Adventist Church for helping to make that possible. Since "the devil works in mysterious ways", we're thankful to Dick Chapin.

However, there are still other communities that remain unserved by good stations like KUCV-FM. Just because I am pleased and fortunate to get this fine station on my radio dial, I am not forgetting the many people in this state who are, as yet, unserved.

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