

# opinion/editorial

## Problems in court expected if bong bill passes

Caught up in a typical wave of moralistic emotionalism, the Legislature last week allowed introduction of a bill that would ban sales of drug paraphernalia in the state.

While the issue raised in the bill may deserve public consideration, this newspaper questions the wisdom of suspending unicameral rules to allow the bill's introduction with only 23 days left in the session.

Seven days notice is required before a mandatory public hearing, further reducing the time senators have to deal with the issue.

Also, the hearing will be in Omaha, where letters and editorials printed in *The World-Herald* have demonstrated a public fear of paraphernalia. Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers is calling the measure the "World-Herald bill."

While public opinion is an important consideration in the introduction of bills, because of the short time the Legislature has allowed itself, the

concerned public can, at best, expect an over-emotional, shoddy and superficial job of dealing with the issue.

Because of the bill's apparently overwhelming public support, "greased" is an accurate term to describe how it will travel through the Legislature.

The danger in dealing with an inherently emotional issue in a very short period of time is that the bill will not be specific enough, and will be enjoined — in part or in whole — by the courts.

Thus, the Legislature will find itself obligated to spend more time, perhaps as soon as next year, spending taxpayers' money to do the prudent job that should have been done in the first place.

Other states that have dealt with the issue have had trouble getting a bill specific enough to stand up in court. And, because the bill would

threaten certain business interests, a suit certainly would be filed within days of the measure's passage.

For the Nebraska Legislature to imagine that it can pass a legally specific bill on a difficult subject in only 23 days is naive and arrogant.

Further, the benefit of rushing such a bill through must be weighed against the time lost for other bills.

Although some state senators, and apparently some citizens, think passage of the bill will save some young people from getting involved with drugs, it will not.

Such a premise only shows how little the Legislature knows about the subject with which it has chosen to deal. Which came first, marijuana or the bong?

Clearly, bongs and other drug paraphernalia would not be produced if there was not a demand for them, created by people who smoke marijuana or use other drugs.

The Legislature is seeking a band-

aid remedy for a problem it has not been successful in addressing. That problem is drug traffic and abuse, and banning paraphernalia sales, while it may win a few votes for supporters, will not reduce drug traffic.

The money spent to enforce such a measure could be much better spent on addressing the real problem, if in fact the Legislature wants to tackle the complex situation.

If instead lawmakers want to win votes with symbolic rhetoric, Patrick Venditte's anti-paraphernalia bill is the route to take.

Maybe next year, after the greased measure has been declared vague and unenforceable, the senators will take the time to consider alternative measures, like making it a felony to sell paraphernalia to minors, a much easier law to write, and equally popular with concerned parents.

Randy Essex

## letters to the editor

In Monday's (March 3) Guest Opinion, Mr. Schofield argues: "At a university only scientific disciplines have a right to a place." Personally, I greatly enjoy literature and fine arts, and would fight to retain their place on this campus. But even were this not the case, I would take objection to this impetuous and careless statement. To pompously declare that scientific disciplines, and therefore scientific analyses and viewpoints, are the only legitimate fare for students and people in general, is at best innocuously absurd and at worst dangerous.

Earlier in his opinion, Mr. Schofield criticized the Church for, among many things, intolerance. This intolerance for other views and ideas that the Church did not agree with, apparently (I will accept Mr. Schofield's account, as I am no Church historian), led to "obscurantism and obfuscation," to "lies" and "self-deceptions," and to a "blood-soaked record of misery." And all these atrocities seem attributable to intolerance of others and narrow-mindedness. Well, as the song by

the Who goes, "Meet the new boss/Same as the old boss." To replace one set of intolerance and narrow-mindedness with another hardly seems much of an advancement. To tolerate only scientific views seems fearfully close to what the Church is attacked for earlier; so close that I can't see any significant difference. I would hope that a scholar could accept, or at least tolerate, a multiplicity of viewpoints.

Whether I, or anyone else, accept what Josh McDowell has to say is a matter for each individual to decide. And everyone should be allowed to decide. Josh McDowell has a right to express what he believes, and people have a right to be allowed to hear it. And it doesn't stop there; these rights belong to everyone, even (God forbid!) scientists. So, what do you say we have a little tolerance and a little open-mindedness? Who knows, we might even learn something valuable.

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Sophomore, Economics  
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DON'T GIVE ME THAT 'I'M DEALING WITH THE IRANIAN PROBLEM' EXCUSE... YOU'RE GOING TO AMY'S RECITAL... NOW GET DRESSED!

## Active voters focusing on fundamental values

WASHINGTON—Whether or not you like the results, there is a sense that the 1980 presidential selection system is working well so far. Despite the distortion resulting from the continued absence of the sequestered gentleman whose job is at stake, the primaries and caucuses are reflecting the intensity and volatility of the voters' feelings about the country and the men who would lead it. And there is more rationality to the results than a first glance would suggest.

david broder

The best news is that Americans are voting in increased numbers whenever they have a chance. From the first caucuses in Iowa, turnouts in both parties have exceeded advance predictions and have been far above the levels seen in the 1970s.

That is no surprise. When I first explored the campaign scene last fall, I was struck by the seriousness with which voters were quizzing the candidates and the frequency with which their questions centered on the most fundamental values: freedom, independence, the security of the nation's future.

That intensity has grown as inflation has accelerated, posing a direct challenge to our familiar economic freedoms, and as events in the Persian Gulf region have dramatized America's loss of control of its own destiny—

and its own citizen-diplomats.

The voters understand well that these are hard times, and they are discarding candidates who seem to them too flawed or too frivolous for such circumstances.

It is abundantly clear that the electorate is far from making a final decision on who can stand that scrutiny. The extraordinary volatility of this campaign is reflected in the finding by Richard Wirthlin, Ronald Reagan's pollster, that 48 percent of the Republicans in New Hampshire changed their minds about their candidate preference during the month of February, and one-third switched in the final week before the voting.

That is tough on those who take advance polls for newspapers and for political pundits of all stripes—two categories of people God put on earth to embarrass. But it clearly suggests that the modesty with which President Carter's backers are accepting congratulations for their victories over Ted Kennedy and Jerry Brown is well-advised.

More than ever, the basic political wisdom is that what goes up can come down. And a President who holds his current popularity despite the frustration of his foreign policy and the failure of his economic policy has a long way to drop if and when the turnabout comes.

Meantime, there are indications that the voters are paying attention and getting things pretty well in focus at this preliminary stage of the selection process.

The interviews done by ABC News with voters leaving the polls in New Hampshire convey a reassuring sense of rationality in the voting decisions.

Among the Democratic voters, those who felt most concerned about the problems of the poor and elderly went for Kennedy 3-to-1. Carter finished third behind both Kennedy and Brown among those most concerned about inflation and energy. But on foreign policy, Carter overwhelmed his opponents.

The real story of the Democratic choice was reflected in those same voters' feelings about the personal qualities of the men on the ballot. Among the Democrats most concerned with leadership qualities, experience in government and the ability to get things done, Kennedy rated far ahead of Carter. But among those most concerned with a President's honesty and his stability in time of crisis, the margins for Carter were overwhelming. The sad news for Kennedy is that it is the public judgment on his personal character that is crippling him.

Among Republicans, Ronald Reagan's victory was based on strong approval from those most concerned with leadership and honesty, among the personal qualities, and inflation and holding down government spending and red tape, among the issues. Those Republicans most concerned about foreign policy and experience in government divided almost evenly between Reagan and runner-up George Bush. Those most concerned about energy questions in the two parties gave much more consideration to iconoclasts Brown and John B. Anderson.

The care and discernment the voters are displaying will be needed as this fascinating election year continues.