

opinion/editorial

Nebraska is leader in First Amendment freedoms

Nebraska is well known in several areas—football, gasohol studies and agriculture quickly come to mind.

But perhaps the least known quality in the state lies in First Amendment rights.

Led by Lincoln Journal Editor Joe Seacrest and lawyer Alan Peterson, Media of Nebraska has kept the doors open not only for the press, but for citizens statewide to express themselves freely.

The most recent victory for the lobbying group was stalling action by the Legislature's Rules Committee on a proposed closed meetings rule. As Seacrest said, "closed meetings would depart from the Nebraska

Legislature's great tradition of openness."

Media of Nebraska has had its hands full with First Amendment legislation since its organization in 1973. Of the 597 bills introduced during last year's session, 85 had something to do with the media.

The local media lobbied 22 bills in 1979 and were involved in the state's new open meetings, open records, privacy and newsroom search laws.

Nebraska was the fifth state to enact legislation protecting newsrooms from unwarranted searches. Such action has been necessary since police, armed with a search warrant,

ransacked a Stanford university student newspaper office for information in 1977.

Highlighted by a U.S. Supreme Court decision invalidating a gag order in the Simants murder case four years ago, the Nebraska media have been highly successful in ensuring First Amendment rights in this state.

Perhaps one can attribute such success to cooperation between the law and press. Nebraska is one of few states to have voluntary bar-press guidelines. Such guidelines provide a neutral ground for both professions to operate in the best interests of the public.

Such cooperation is the only approach to ensuring fair trial, free expression and continuance of a free democratic system.

Abuses by the Fourth Estate can be kept in check only through ensuring the opportunity for a responsible press.

Once that opportunity starts slipping away, responsibility and accountability will slip from more than just the ranks of the media.

Speaking not only as future journalists, but as concerned Nebraskans, we appreciate the efforts of the media of Nebraska.

Harry Allen Strunk

Inflation-beater or buffoon? Ford may try again

BOSTON—The question about Jerry Ford's possible entrance into the Republican presidential race is whether it is an exercise in nostalgia or a shrewd and far-sighted political move.

david broder

There has not been such a yearning in a political party for a candidate who is on tiptoes to join the game since... well, since the Democrats were doing nip-ups over Ted Kennedy's broad hints that he might run last fall.

And we all know how well that has worked out.

Ford today is being endowed by Republican leaders with heroic quali-

ties not visible in any GOP candidate since Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Jerry Ford slayed the dragon of inflation when he was in the White House and cut the upward creep in the consumer price index to the almost unimaginable rate of 4.8 percent.

Jerry Ford stood firm with the Soviets and promulgated defense policies that would keep the nation strong.

Jerry Ford tamed the Democratic Congress, without antagonizing its members.

Jerry Ford "healed our land."

The last was said of him by Jimmy Carter, on the inaugural stand. The other things are being said of him by many of those who have been running for the Republican nomination for the past year.

To listen to the Ford references in

the Republican candidate debates, you would think that there would be a unanimous ballot cast for him in Detroit next July, and a cascade of independents and Democrats supporting him over Jimmy Carter in November.

That view of a possible Ford candidacy is unadulterated 100-percent-pure political fantasy.

Let Jerry Ford step one inch across the line to avowed ambition for a full term, and those same Republicans will be reminding people that this is the guy who lost the White House to the inept Jimmy Carter; the guy who forgot there were Soviet divisions in Poland during the second debate; the guy who—yes, indeed—pardoned Richard Nixon.

If you don't think those matters would be raised, then you probably believed last autumn that Chappaquiddick would be no problem for Ted Kennedy.

And if you think that candidate Ford would not have his penchant for malapropism examined closely by the cameras and the press, at least to the extent that Kennedy's uhs-and-ahs have been recorded, then you underestimate the orneriness of us reporters.

For Ford, as for Kennedy, the passage from potential to actual candidate would be a passage from a soft sentimental haze to cold, unflattering light.

But if you understand that, there are still reasons to think that Ford is more than a mirage for Republicans seeking a candidate for the White House.

The private judgment of many of the country's top pollsters—including the one who serves Jimmy Carter, Pat Caddell—is that Ford is potentially the toughest opponent that Carter would face.

The reason, very simply, is that Ford has been there. He has done the job. More than any other Republican, he would strip Carter of the incumbency advantage which Carter has used to

decimate the Kennedy challenge.

Uniquely in the nation, Ford can dispute Carter's Rose Garden pronouncements about the most serious questions on national security, and diplomatic and economic policy. And he can do it from a position of equal authority.

But if Ford looms as a formidable general election candidate, there is still good reason for Republicans to hesitate about luring him into the race at this late date. His entry could well scramble the picture and damage, rather than enhance, the possibility of anyone achieving the unstated but well-understood goal of stopping Ronald Reagan.

By the end of this week he will have missed the filing deadlines for 21 primaries with 908 of the convention's 1,994 delegates. The late primaries are not the best for Ford. In the states that will vote between May 3 and June 3 this year, Reagan rolled up a 553 to 446 delegate margin over Ford in 1976. And that was when Ford had the White House and a tested campaign organization available to him.

There is one other point—party unity. In his "come-get-me-I'm-waiting" interview with Adam Clymer of the New York Times last weekend, Ford unleashed the ultimate rhetorical weapon that "moderate" Republicans always use against conservatives. He said Reagan "can't win" a general election.

That is an argument absolutely guaranteed to enrage conservatives, who have had it thrown in their face ever since the days of Barry Goldwater and Bob Taft. If Ford beat Reagan out of the nomination again, with that kind of argument, he would face a party split worse than the one he says cost him the presidency in 1976.

That, too, is part of the reality he enters, if and when he steps across the line.

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**A 1976 FORD
WAITING TO
BE RECALLED...**



letters to the editor

As I was walking out of Law Library the other day, I noticed a sign that read "Black armbands for silent protest of capital punishment." After seeing that box of black armbands, I just had to write this letter. Something about this protest, specifically the people involved, disturbed me deeply, therefore I will direct my thought of this message to these people.

Since I am well aware of your constitutional arguments against capital punishment, good ones for sure, my point here is not to reignite old disagreements about capital punishment. So let's toss the matter of legal rights of a condemned murderer aside for now and let's take an objective look at the matter from a little different viewpoint.

Let's take a satirical look at a situation where the murder victim is not some obscure person you read about on page 32 of the newspaper, but let us say it's your sister or brother or even you—yes, you! One evening you are walking to the library and two guys decide they want

your money, so they take it. But in the process they nonchalantly beat you until your heart stops beating. And as you lay there dead with all your constitutional rights protecting you, these gentlemen saunter off chuckling and counting your money.

But even worse, say an incident like this happened to someone you deeply cared for; think about it! Now after an occurrence such as this, are you going to tell me you wouldn't want to "nail" these guys in a personal vendetta type way? If you can honestly, HONESTLY, say no, then I believe you have just defied something known as human nature. I can't say for sure how I would feel about capital punishment after something like this would happen to me. Although I think I could sit here now, and even though friends of mine have, I know I couldn't. But my point is you can't either! How can you say or anyone for that matter, make an honest evaluation of capital punishment from a situation you haven't or probably never will have had experienced. Don't we tend to protest contro-

versies like capital punishment from a padded dream world of books, beer, and easy times. It seems to me if you wanted a real convincing argument, you should enlist families of deceased murder victims to protest capital punishment with you. I think people would tend to listen to these first hand experiences, rather than to you. I know I would.

To conclude I must admit it kind of sickens me to think of somebody being gassed or electrocuted. But what really makes me sick is the thought of capital punishment being totally abolished, in other words no last resort option of punishment to hideous, outrageous crimes. And in eliminating capital punishment altogether, you are saying "Nobody can deserve that kind of punishment, not even if that person killed me!"

Steve Jack
Senior/Mechanical engineering
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