

Perspectives



Latent racism rampant in American politics

By Randy Essex

Last fall, I was shocked and later — probably out of sheer denial — amused, when a UNL professor told me that conservative politicians have failed to tap their greatest asset in appealing to the American public.

Latent racism.

George Wallace, the professor said, owed his marginal success in presidential races to tapping racism to a greater extent than any other recent national politician.

It was uneasy amusement I found in this, and as the year went by, that feeling of disbelief disappeared. He wasn't kidding, and there is nothing funny about it.

Declared "unelectable" by Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, known as an arch conservative, and probably owing much of his success to that reputation, breezed to the Republican nomination.

Surprised by George Bush in the Iowa caucuses, Reagan campaigned hard in New Hampshire, and told a revealing "joke" designed to offend everybody from ducks to Mafia dons. But he won overwhelmingly.

Democrats in California's 43rd Congressional District also endorsed a man who believes in white superiority in their June 3 primary, when they chose Tom Metzger, California Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan as their nominee. That's right — Democrats — the party allegedly dedicated to civil rights and social justice.

But Metzger would have only one vote out of more than 400 in the House of Representatives.

Harold Covington, the leader of the U.S. Nazi Party, won 43 percent of the vote for the Republican nomination for North Carolina attorney general. Unlike Congressmen, attorney generals can prosecute (or persecute) people without majority approval. Giving a Nazi a mandate to determine who to prosecute, which laws to challenge and which ones to protect almost certainly would slow progress toward social justice, at least in one state, and would increase the caseload in federal courts, wasting time on racist cases.

I read about Covington and Metzger in a syndicated column by Kevin P. Phillips, who seems genuinely concerned about the rise of facism in America. But it strikes me that not enough people are similarly concerned, perhaps because they are not informed, but maybe because they really feel that way.

One cannot help but wonder why the meaningless phrase "Let's make America great again," inspires so many people to support a man with no experience in federal government, and why, if Reagan is successful, that slogan probably will be

the rallying cry of conservative candidates throughout the 80s.

It is overly simplistic to believe that changes in international affairs since World War II were caused by a lack of American military strength, or that increasing that military strength will change the world back to the way it was. And it wasn't really so great then. People went hungry while Americans developed an industry to take off fat.

The same sort of insensitivity occurs concerning domestic "greatness."

Time magazine, in an analysis of the black Americans' situation in 1980, quoted a black leader as saying the only time anyone cares about blacks is after a riot. Then, in describing Washington's ghettos, Time wrote that vice, narcotics traffic and other evils were going on "all too close to the White House."

Harlem and Watts are as bad, especially for their residents, as the ghettos in Washington. But Time didn't think the vice in those ghettos was as bad, apparently because no one could see it. That is a reflection of the disease that apparently is spreading unchecked in America.

Inner city blacks may be prone to burning their neighborhoods again out of frustration. And the white people may be prone to burning crosses again, and electing movie stars, KKK Grand Demons and Nazis, as a solution to domestic and foreign problems.

Social justice and all the other holy-sounding goals set by our constitution do not seem to represent the will of the majority. Power and comfort, at any cost, are what "we" want, whether it is possible to return to the 50s or not.

It is not possible, and supporting officials who seek that sort of fantasy is nothing more than a refusal to face up to modern times, and the result will not be a "great" America, but one unready to face the world that has changed while we sought nostalgia.

Hollywood won't be able to make a movie that stops the necessary redistribution of wealth and power, nor will it be able to produce a president who can. Thirty percent of the people in the world possess 70 percent of the wealth. If majority rule is what America believes in, it is easy to see why our influence is declining.

And the KKK can burn many crosses, but the smoke will not cover the problems faced by the poor, many of whom are black. But if the UNL professor was right, most of America doesn't believe poor blacks and other poor people have a problem.

But they do, and it cannot be ignored, or soon everyone in this country will have a bigger problem; trying to figure out what happened to the American dream, which we chased long after we should have been awake.

Head shops surrender to legislative pressure

By Kim Wilt

Terry Moore isn't going to sell bongs anymore. Terry Moore owner of Dirt Cheap isn't going to sell bongs, pipes, papers, clips, spoons, screens or anything else that could be classified as "drug paraphernalia" under Nebraska's new law banning the sale of such items.

Dirt Cheap, one of Lincoln's "head shops and hide-outs for the '60s disenchanting" is going out of the drug accessory business. So is Homer's Record's and Tapes, recent expatriate from the Old Market, and maker of one of the more likable local commercials ("H-O-M-E-R-S, Homer's has the very best re-cords," sung to the tune of the Nestles Chocolate jingle).

Why? Well, people seem wary of coming into Dirt Cheap, according to Moore.

Are sales down? Not particularly, but he does admit to a "drop-off in traffic."

If the traffic is dropping off, how can sales be steady? Maybe stooges for organized crime, answering to a boss in New York, are buying all the paraphernalia en masse, and plan to sell them to state senators' grade-school children. Maybe people are buying bongs and rushing out to sell them to their friends who are afraid to be seen going into Dirt Cheap. Regardless, Dirt Cheap is still about the only place left where you can find a complete set of Kurt Vonnegut's works, if you want to.

The bookstore will be combined with the record store into one building, so that no one will have to face dirty looks or fear for his or her social standing by being seen entering it. Records are respectable.

The sudden fear of the proprietors of Dirt Cheap and Homer's is interesting, to say the least. Homer's unearthed a spokesperson, who remaining anonymous, told the Lincoln Journal that the store is quitting the bong business because "there's too much controversy."

Apparently.

The other reason given for Homer's' discontinuation of drug paraphernalia sales is that "not enough of our business is devoted to it."

Oh, come on.

Denying that the entire bottom floor

of your business is devoted to the sale of bongs, clips, papers etc., is not going to win sympathy for your fight against a poorly-written bill that already has been hobbled by a temporary restraining order. That doesn't seem to bother Homer's and Dirt Cheap owners, who were plaintiffs in a suit challenging the law's constitutionality. Moore has written the other 13 plaintiffs, who are members of the Nebraska Accessories Trade Association, about his decision.

"The whole suit may fall apart if enough stores drop out," he told the Lincoln Journal reporter.

Pipe Dream in Omaha seems willing to follow the lead. An employee there complained that the younger buyers aren't buying anymore, which is logical because NATA members have signed a statement pledging not to sell to anyone under 18. It hardly seems sensible to patronize a store that you know isn't going to sell to you. The clientele is older, she said, and "many people ask about the statute."

Well, weren't stores hoping to get an older clientele from this under-18 ban?

Furthermore, it seems only natural that people would ask about the statute. After all, it affects the goods they are buying. In fact, about the only thing that does not seem logical here is the reaction of the store owners.

They have gotten the restraining order, and they voluntarily have met the state halfway by not selling to young customers. Dirt Cheap even had placed a cheery "business as usual" sign in its window.

So why the drop-out, why the sudden concern about "image" and the denial that paraphernalia is a significant part of business?

Stores that sold bongs and pipes during the days when it was much more of an underground, daring thing to do, and who advertised themselves easily as head shos ought not to be accused of cowardice too quickly.

No, the problem seems to be more of an "oh, to hell with it," attitude, and the feeling that the law isn't worth fighting against. Dirt Cheap and Homer's had what looked like a successful challenge to a ridiculous law, and for some reason they just have given up.

Letter to the editor

Another perspective

In recent days the media has focused a great deal of attention on the budgetary crunch faced by UNL. Many of these stories and editorials have reported options which are being considered by the university to meet the educational need of the students, while at the same time staying within the budget constraints imposed by the Legislature and the NU Board of Regents, and the impact the various options would have upon UNL students and faculty.

One of the options proposed was shifting the financial responsibility for 30 to 50 sections of freshman English from the College of Arts and Sciences to the Division of Continuing Studies. This was proposed to assure the availability of these offerings to students.

Some of the news stories and editorials strongly suggested that such a shift would result in a reduction of the quality of instruction offered to students. This is not true.

There are two built-in controls which assure that the quality of courses offered through the Division of Continuing Studies are comparable to those offered in the traditional residence program.

First, all credit earned in any course offered by the Division is granted by the academic colleges and departments of the university, not by the Division of Continuing Studies. The content and quality of the course is governed by the department

and college responsible for the subject matter area.

Second, and most important, the instructors who teach courses offered through the Division are recruited, hired, and assigned by the departments and colleges, with the administrative approval of the Division of Continuing Studies. The departments and colleges maintain responsibility for the content and quality of instruction, while the Division accepts responsibility for program administration.

Faculty utilized by the Division are remunerated for instructional purposes only. They are not asked to do research, serve as student advisors, provide other public service, or accept committee assignments as is expected of a faculty member of a regular full-time appointment. Therefore, a faculty member is paid a higher rate for a typical department appointment than for teaching a departmental course through the Division of Continuing Studies.

It should be noted that faculty stipends paid by Continuing Studies Divisions across the nation have traditionally been low. Concern for this issue is reflected in various professional journals and in discussions at national meetings in continuing education. Perhaps this reflects our nation's failure to fully support

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