

Wessels urges 18 percent increase in tax support

By Jeanne Mohatt

University officials should request at least an 18 percent increase in tax support from the Legislature if the university is to continue to provide students with a quality education, ASUN president Renee Wessels said Wednesday.

Saturday the Board of Regents will determine budget guidelines for the 1981-82 school year.

"The Board will preliminarily set the level of funding that the university will seek from the state as well as the tuition rate it will expect from the students," Wessels said at a press conference.

The regents will decide on the final request at their Sept. 12 meeting.

At last month's regents meeting, NU President Ronald Roskens proposed that the university request an 18 percent increase in state support for the 1981-82 school year. But the regents asked him to return to this month's meeting with alternative budget guidelines.



Staff photo by Janet Hammer

ASUN President Renee Wessels.

Irish immigrants

Lincolnites carried on battle for Irish independence

By Jeanne Mohatt

For centuries the Irish have battled for their independence from Great Britain. Thousands have died on many battlefields—on Ballinamuck's red bog in 1798, in Dublin during the 1916 Easter Rising, and in Belfast on Bloody Sunday in 1969.

During the potato famine of 1845, the Irish flooded America's shores to escape starvation.

Some moved west and a few settled and raised families in Lincoln.

But these Irish families did not leave Ireland behind. The Irish immigrants supplied money and smuggled weapons to Irish revolutionaries.

Lincoln headquarters

In 1884, Patrick Egan, a Lincoln resident, was elected president of the Irish National League of America, an organization advocating Ireland's independence. Lincoln became the headquarters for the organization. In January 1886, John Patrick Sutton became the league's secretary. He also moved to Lincoln.

The Irish National League of America held its third convention in Chicago in August 1886, and about 1,300 men elected another Lincoln resident, John Fitzgerald, president.

The league's history begins in 1879, when Michael Davitt, an Irish patriot imprisoned seven years in a British dungeon, established the Irish Land League upon his release. Charles Stuart Parnell, the Irish representative to Britain's House of Commons, gave the league his blessing, and several branches were formed in America, including one in Lin-

coln. Roskens has prepared alternative guidelines requesting 15 and 12 percent increases besides the 18 percent increase. He will present these alternatives to the regents Saturday.

The non-voting student regent said "Although an 18 percent increase is a modest figure which will only help the university make up for present deficiencies, it is vital if the university is to be taken seriously as an academic institution.

"The situation is desperate at UNL." Several programs, including the Centennial Educational Program, are under consideration for elimination by regents, in response to Regent Kermit Hansen's five year plan, she said.

Wessels said the amount of money the university should seek from the state has been heavily debated in the past.

The state obviously has money to commit to higher education, she said, pointing out the extra \$20 to \$30 million dollars available in the treasury for state agencies.

"A lot of the fault falls on Gov. Thone," she said. Last year he "slashed tax assistance to 11 percent, a veto of about \$3 million."

"The quality of education at UNL has been directly and adversely affected by minimal appropriations in the past," she said.

"Staggering inflation rates" have made it impossible for the Chemistry Department to buy chemicals.

Eleven faculty positions in the College of Engineering and Technology remain unfilled because the university lacks the money to hire professors at wages competitive with the market.

"The library is discontinuing subscriptions to periodicals and magazines used for research because of inadequate

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Staff photo by Kathy Chenault

GOP nominee Ronald Reagan after his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention. See picture story inside page 2

Agent Orange's effects not known

By Jeanne Mohatt

No one knows how dioxin, a poisonous substance found in the chemical defoliant Agent Orange, will effect 14 Vietnam veterans who were found to have traces of the chemical in their bodies, said the director of UNL's mass spectrometry laboratory.

Michael Gross said the levels of dioxin found in 14 of 33 men tested were not high enough to cause death.

"But no one knows what the long-term effects will be," he said.

The dioxin is stored in the men's fat tissues "like all chlorinated, synthetic, organic material, such as preservatives," he said.

The dioxin is released when the person loses weight. "But no one knows how long it will be before it metabolizes (is released as energy)," he said.

If one of the tested veterans were to

lose all his fat, an impossibility, Gross said, the amount of dioxin released would be 100 times less than the amount needed to cause toxic or lethal effects in the guinea pigs they have tested.

"Humans are less sensitive" to the substance than the tested guinea pigs, he said.

The highest concentrations of dioxin were found in a veteran who helped with Operation Ranchhand in Vietnam, Gross said. Operation Ranchhand was the military operation in charge of spraying the defoliant Agent Orange on Vietnam's countryside. The defoliant stripped growing plants and trees of their leaves.

Gross said the veteran was a non-commissioned officer who handled the chemical frequently, loading it into aircraft and manning the sprays.

"This lends strong support to the belief that the exposure (to the poisonous dioxin) occurred in Vietnam," he said.

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In 1882, the Land League was suppressed in Ireland, and Parnell organized the Irish National League. In 1883, Irishmen and Irish-Americans met in Philadelphia and merged the American Land League into a new organization called the Irish National League of America.

"We are for Irish liberty. Peacefully if we can, otherwise if we must."

The league's purpose was to support Parnell and his efforts to secure Home Rule (Ireland's independence from Britain).

At the Chicago convention in 1886, President Patrick Egan said, "I see emblazoned on these walls the motto, 'We are for Irish liberty. Peacefully if we can, otherwise if we must.'" The quote comes from a story in the Aug. 20, 1886, edition of the Weekly Nebraska State Journal.

The league was listed in the Lincoln City Directory until 1893. It does not exist today.

Lincoln's John Fitzgerald served two terms as the league's president. Born April 29, 1829, in County Limerick, Ireland, he and his family came to America in 1884 after his father was evicted from his farm.

'Fantastic businessman'

Fitzgerald was "a dynamo, a fantastic businessman," said John "Dugie" Doyle, his great-grandson. Doyle, of 3024 Summit Blvd., is an attorney in Lincoln.

Doyle said his great-grandfather was "primarily a railroad contractor...and had large farming and banking interests."

Fitzgerald came to Nebraska in 1869, settled in Plattsmouth, and moved to Lincoln in 1879. He built practically all of the early-day Burlington railroad lines in Nebraska, and he was president of the First National Bank of Lincoln.

The city's first millionaire, Fitzgerald owned real estate in Gage and Jefferson counties—4,000 acres near Greenwood. He also owned 30 acres in Lincoln. His home, Mount Emerald, was on 20th Street between B and C streets.

Despite Fitzgerald's close ties to the Catholic Church, he gave Thomas Doane, a strict Congregationalist, the money to build Doane College in Crete.

He also donated money to the Holy Child Jesus convent and St. Elizabeth Community Health Center in Lincoln.

"He was very active in the movement to free Ireland from England's yoke," great-grandson Doyle said.

Guns stashed in basement

Stories have been told, Doyle said, about guns stashed in the basement of Mount Emerald. Fitzgerald's widow, Mary Kelly Fitzgerald, denied until her death in 1940 that the guns were for any revolutionary purpose, but many people are skeptical of her denial, Doyle said.

John Fitzgerald died in December 1894.

Lincoln's Patrick Egan, an Irish patriot and the Irish National League's 1884 president, was born at Ballymahon County, Longford, Ireland Aug. 31, 1841. He was an important worker for the Irish national movement for independence.

The league's Lincoln branch contributed \$2,400 to the Irish cause in 1885 and \$1,171 in 1888.

At the 1886 Chicago convention, Egan said, "...not only has it (the league) done its part in aiding and supporting the struggle at home...it has made the cause of Ireland respectable and respected amongst Americans."

The battle continues

In 1979, the question of Irish independence still has not been answered. The six predominantly Protestant counties of Northern Ireland (Ulster) are still a British province, and the Irish Republican Army, a Catholic terrorist group, continues to fight for Ireland's independence from Great Britain.

"I don't think historically or even now they (the British) have the right to be there," Doyle said. If the British were to pull out, "civil war would come about because of the factions up in the north," he said.

In the Aug. 27, 1886, Weekly Nebraska State Journal, Patrick Egan, referring to the still-united country under British rule, said:

"My every effort shall be directed towards keeping the green flag of Ireland nailed to the mast until the not far distant day when we shall see it wave over an Irish parliament on College green, making laws for a prosperous and happy nation," said.