

opinion/editorial

Remarks are gloomy comment on NU's future

Last week UNL Interim Chancellor Robert Rutford had some good news for the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce: "The university is not going to fall apart."

With no malice toward Mr. Rutford, who has inherited a difficult job in financially troubled times, we find it a bit unfortunate that optimism about UNL is now expressed in such dismal terms.

As a disclaimer, it should be noted that Rutford made some excellent comments about the faculty and research, which will be discussed later.

But the comment that "We may not be able to have some things that we would like to have, but we will still be here," is gloomy commentary on this university's survival as a land-grant institution dedicated to the education of its young people.

It is contradictory to the NU Board of Regents' continuing lip service to "excellence," a term that has become almost as meaningless

and clearly unattainable as Harvard of the Plains.

The chancellor's comments bring to memory a resolution the regents passed last spring, thanking the state for the 10 percent budget increase it granted, after the university had argued it needed 15 percent just to stay even.

This semester, the Daily Nebraskan has argued that the state is largely to blame for UNL's financial woes, in that fiscal conservatism has overridden the desire expressed in the constitution to have a quality institution of higher learning.

It is obvious that each sector of the university, from the regents to the students, including the faculty and administration, must do everything in its power to convince the state of the need for commitment from state government.

Now, UNL sends a message to the state: We give up. We've been telling you we need this money if you want a quality institution, but you haven't listened, so, (and this is good

news) you won't destroy us. We'll survive.

While that probably was not Rutford's intent, we hope that legislators don't read those connotations into his comments. We hope that the Legislature does, for the first time in recent years, recognize the imperative need to make UNL and the NU system comparable to other land-grant schools.

Rutford's comments about faculty illustrate why this is needed. UNL attracts good faculty, he said, but loses them because other schools can pay them more. Granted, private industry will always offer more than educational institutions, so some good faculty will be lost. But money is needed to prevent program cuts and deficient pay scales that contribute to making UNL a stepping stone to a better job.

Yes, the university will be here next year, and the year after that. It won't fall apart. But that is not the goal the state had in mind when the school was created.

Birth control view needs amending

BOSTON—It is almost a year since Pope John II began his visit here with renewed hope and closed it with old warnings.

It is almost a year now since this charming man played kindly Polish politician for the overture, and stern traditional Father for the finale.

It is almost a year since he told American Catholics again that birth control was evil.

ellen goodman

What has happened in these 12 months? Did American Catholics throw away their contraceptives? Did husbands and wives turn away from each other in the middle of the night, fearful that pleasure without procreation was a sin? Hardly.

Perhaps the pope hammered a wedge of guilt between some loving bodies. But most shook their heads and continued living at an emotional distance from their church, picking and choosing from its teachings for their lives. As one woman said to me last October, "The pope is in Rome and I am on the pill."

Now, 12 months later, the American bishops are trying again to bridge this gap. In a delicate speech of loyal dissent, Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco told the Vatican this week that "a very large number of men and women of goodwill do not accept the teaching on the intrinsic evil of each and every use of contraceptives."

He was understating it. In this country, a full 76.5 percent of Catholic women are using birth control and almost all of them are using a form condemned by the pope.

The bishop said that the "impasse on this moral teaching . . . is harmful to the church." Moreover, he mentioned reality: "We cannot credibly treat the problem of contraception without clear and honest recognition of the grave demographic problem of our times."

There is a tendency to ignore this argument, as if two ancient enemies were still carrying on an endless debate in exile. But it isn't irrelevant when we think about the power of the church in the bulging Third World or when we think about our own fate.

The profound controversy is about the future and about our past, our behavior and our psyche. It is about birth control versus sex control.

The dominant attitude of the Catholic Church, which was, after all, the Christian Church throughout the Middle Ages, was that sexual love was evil. Even inside marriage.



There are examples sprinkled through church history of theologians excommunicated for preaching that marriage was as virtuous as virginity. There were theologians who believed it would be better for the human race to die out than to continue reproducing through sin.

It wasn't only St. Augustine who described the marital sexual act as innocent, but passion as sinful. To Gregory the Great, pleasure was also the evil in the sexual act.

Repression then, was the original birth control method advocated by the church. That is not too surprising: It was, for one thing, the only reliable method.

Even today, it is not hard to read the anxiety of the celibate male Catholic hierarchy. There is the fear that when pregnancy is under control, sex is out of control: the belief is that sex, the powerful human urge, should be contained, not its "natural consequence."

In industrialized countries, only two or three generations have been able to experience their sexuality with less fear of pregnancy. These new freedoms also bring choices and sometimes anxieties. We've had to find our way through new realities, struggling for a new set of values. Living with "freedom," we have had to create our own limits.

But we are not going back, because we do not want to

go back. The question is whether our choices will be shared with the poor, overpopulated countries where each new child may mean less food for the existing children—where new life can really mean marginal life, even starvation.

The Vatican surely believes it is favoring morality over secular "reality." The pope votes for "self-control" and against birth control.

The American bishops have asked the Vatican to listen, just to listen, to the opinions of men in the church. But the church must also open its ears to the oldest longings of people to both free their sexual feelings and control their lives.

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letters to the editor

I'm writing concerning the editorial about the "Moral Majority" on Oct. 2. Yes, the evangelical bloc will be a powerful force in the near future politically. Why, does that scare you? We as a group will be powerful because we care, we know what we believe, and best of all we know why.

I am a Christian first; my beliefs in and knowledge of God are the basis of everything else I believe. Because of my faith in God I have opinions about political as well as religious subjects. My religious beliefs are primary, but that doesn't make my political convictions invalid.

The editorial also implied that some group of lofty clergy is at the top of this movement. I disagree. I believe God is at the top of it, and is in the process of motivating all his followers to stand for what they believe. I haven't seen any pre-punched voter ballots being passed around Christian circles and probably wouldn't pay too much attention if I did. Yet we hold some basic common beliefs.

Concerning gay rights and the ERA, these are religious issues, not because I say so, but because God does. The

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