

opinion/editorial

Voters endorse consumption

Editor's note: Parts of the following editorial are based on a June 26, 1980 *Summer Nebraskan* column, originally written by the current Daily Nebraskan editor.

Ronald Reagan's Tuesday victory presents no new challenges for America during the next four years. The challenges already are there, and Reagan and the Republican Senate must deal with them.

If a democracy always is right when it makes its majority decisions, we were wrong in our liberal views, at least concerning the presidential race. But this newspaper seriously questions if the values we have tried to convey really are the wrong ones.

The country definitely wanted conservatism. Whether that was the right choice, and whether that desire is in our long-term interest won't be revealed for several years.

This country's turn toward right-wing hawkishness developed rapidly after the seizure of hostages in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

It manifested itself as early as the primaries, when California's 43rd congressional district made its Democratic nominee Tom Metzger, California Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. Harold Covington, the leader of the U.S. Nazi Party, won 43 percent of the Republican primary vote for attorney general of North Carolina.

Now we're going to make America great again. The evident view is that building every nuclear and conventional weapon we can dream up will make us great . . . again.

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 strength will make the world the way it was, or the way we'd like it to be.

Domestically, social justice and all those other noble-sounding goals found in our constitution are not the current goals of the majority. The majority is much more concerned with making payments on two cars, getting loans for home improvements, eating affordable steak every night and being able to get credit cards.

No, no, America need not conserve. We can go on overconsuming until there's nothing left to consume, and if we've got enough guns, nobody will stop us while we're at it. And if we have to take it away from someone else, that's their problem for not having the weapons to stop us.

Earth and nation will endure petty machinations

I flew across the country the other day. . .

I wonder what my grandfather would have thought of that casual statement. He was born in San Francisco. To him, crossing the country was a great adventure—a

week on the train, a long rattling week of cinders, sweet coal smoke, lowing whistles, clanging grade crossings in the night and starched white napery. And his parents had "come around the Horn" six months or more on a creaking, heaving sailing ship.

To him, this was the vastest of lands. The East was virtually another country. Washington was a world away. And the president was a scratchy voice on a radio or a gray flickering figure on the Fox Movietone News.

"I flew across the country the other day, Grandpa."

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"Who do you think you are, boy," he would have said with that deep chuckle of his, "Peter Pan?"

Yet I did. As thousands of others do each day, I flew across the country without much fuss in less than five hours. I thought, as we took off, how small our country has become. Now New York is only an area code—just three digits—farther than the house next door.

President Carter and President-elect Reagan visited me almost nightly for months in living color just across the room, I know them well. We Americans

live close together in this shrunken global village. And we know our presidential candidates too well.

Grandpa was for Herbert Hoover. He said the country would go to "H-E-double-toothpicks" if Mr. Roosevelt got in. But I'm sure he didn't mean it. The White House was so far away, the president so distant, the land so vast and so enduring.

But now . . . now so many of us are so sure that the next president will prove an unmitigated disaster and bring this nation down in ruins. We know both of them so well in this crowded, packed-tight technocracy.

I thought of this as the jumbo jet thundered off the runway, circled to the east and climbed six miles up into the clear autumn sky. And I was surprised when I looked down to see how little the land has changed, really, since my grandfather's day.

The suburbs crept farther inland, of course, from the California coast. But in no time, the golden foothills and then the dark green Sierra swelled up beneath us, lake-dappled, verdant, snow-dusted and untouched as far as the eye could see.

Now below us the great Western desert stretched on beyond horizon after horizon, raw, tortured, silvery grays, acid ochers, burnt siennas—only a rare-thinly-penciled highway indicating man had every passed this way.

used against a population and 25 years later napalmed unarmed, illiterate Asians. It's easy to see why we deserve this lifestyle.

But most of all, we believe in majority rule. If we really believe in majority rule and the equality of all men and women, we should be very afraid, because 70 percent of the world has only 30 percent of the wealth. They are the majority, and they don't like us.

Ronald Reagan said this spring in Grand Island, "It's time that the United States let the world know that we don't care whether they like us or not; we're going to be respected."

They've never liked us, and they can't possibly respect us. That's what we deserve. They are afraid of us. That's what America has decided it wants to reinforce.

Gradually, as the hours wore on, this eternal emptiness yielded. The Rockies thrust up, white tipped, then down into the yellowed plains and over the quilted Middle West, the neat patchwork of browns and greens gliding by league after league, the browns and greens of the aged foods of mankind.

The stewardesses served us our plastic lunches on our plastic trays and we sat shoulder-to-shoulder nine abreast, sipping coffee from plastic cups. I was asked to lower my shade so the others might watch the movie, but I raised it an inch or so to peek occasionally.

How few towns there were, even as we reached the East, and never a city. Yet towns and cities are all that exist in our global village.

And I came to feel as we finally sailed down over Manhattan's towers in the setting sun that my grandfather was right and that the telephone, the television and the airplane are all illusions, all distortions of reality.

And even if Mr. Reagan is as incompetent as his detractors contend, which I doubt, the very vastness of this land insures it from the petty machinations of men.

The nation will endure. The earth abides.

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The year: A.D. 476 The place: Rome . . . And you are there!

After all, we're the chosen people. God has blessed us; it says so on our coins, and Ronald Reagan says so, so it must be true.

Oh, yes, we are moral. That's why the gap between the rich and poor in the world has more than doubled since we began our wonderful, altruistic overseas investment schemes.

That's why bellies bloat all across the Third World while some Americans make money on an industry dedicated to taking fat off Americans. We're moral because millionaires can give \$1,000 to CARE and pretend they've done their part.

What exactly did we do to deserve our grand life style? Well, we conquered the Indians and imported blacks to pick cotton for the shirts on our backs. We used the only atomic weapons ever