

opinion/editorial

Government has obligation to meet social needs

President Ronald Reagan's declared war on government spending is frightening because he is recommending a battle plan featuring survival of the fittest tactics.

No progressive, responsible government that truly wants to operate in the best interests of the citizens for which it is formed should encourage this all-out competition. Such a system only illustrates an obvious ignorance or disregard for inherent differences and circumstances faced by individual members in a society.

It was the realization not all people naturally are accorded the same opportunities in life that spawned the formation of the social programs and services now being threatened.

A tidal wave of news reports and commentaries came after Reagan's proposals to make widespread cuts in government programs were announced.

Many critics have said they fear these changes would benefit the affluent at the expense of the poor. Sadly, those dismal forecasts appear to be logical and alarming predictions.

But the problems go deeper than even that low point. The president obviously believes, as he expressed to Congress, a government does not exist to promote social change. He must believe a government exists only to govern: to pass laws

and not to attempt to offer services whereby people who face disadvantages can be helped to help themselves.

In defense of the mass reductions being proposed, supporters of Reagan's plan to rescue the economy point to abuses of social programs as a reason to significantly reduce or eliminate these services.

But it's not fair to assume all people who are unemployed don't want to work; that those who can't afford to pursue a college education don't want to work hard enough for that opportunity; or that people who can't afford to put food on

their table are looking only for a handout.

Undoubtedly, abuses of these programs do occur. But it would make more sense to devote energy toward preventing those abuses, rather than advocating whopping cuts.

The new president is making a grave mistake in viewing people as human units to be pitted against each other in a contest to get ahead. He further proposes to compound the problem by not realizing a government has an obligation to serve citizens by establishing and maintaining equalizing components in the system like social programs and services.



to the editor

Literature stolen

The area in the union for student organizations and others to leave free literature is well appreciated by those who are interested in what some of the organizations may be all about. As a student organization, ECKANKAR values the opportunity to provide literature to those who may be interested in a spiritual path which offers the individual freedom to choose what path or teachings they wish to follow. Unfortunately, there are those who would deny a person that right. In the past months or so, the literature we have placed in the union for people who are interested has been removed (stolen). We know it was stolen, as that much literature does not disappear overnight when people are picking up pamphlets and books one at a time, which we would hope would happen. Instead, all the literature put out is gone the next day. This has happened before, in fact, quite often over the last two years. I do not know if it is the same person or persons responsible over this time span. I do know that, as far as I can tell, the other literature such as the Christian literature has not been stolen. I know that this applies to a minority, and it is to this minority that this letter is addressed. Those of us following the teachings of ECKANKAR would never think of removing any other group's material. We ask that others please give us the same consideration. We do, after all, live in a democracy, not a theocracy. I hope this will resolve the matter.

Larry Mozer
Senior, Philosophy

Check out UNO

To the students of UNL: If you want a rec center, then vote for it. If you don't know what you're missing, then go see UNO's.

Keith Briggs
Senior, Chemical Engineering

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For Bill Haley, 1955 was the end

Most of us are lucky enough to be allowed to live our lives on an incline, trying to make each day better than the one before.

A few of us, though, are destined to be forever frozen in time.

It was the spring of 1969. I was in Florida, at a motel called the Newport in Miami Beach. Dinner was finished, and I had a drink in the motel's bar—it was called the Rhum Room—and then decided to take a walk by the ocean.

As I passed by one of the motel's public rooms, I heard a strangely familiar sound. It was music, but it was too loud to be a record. And yet what else could it be but a record? And yet what else could it be but a record? It was

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Bill Haley and the Comets singing "Rock Around the Clock," so it had to be a record.

I looked into the room. There were several hundred card chairs set up, all facing the front. Only a couple of dozen people were in the room, though. Some elderly guests of the motel, and a handful of children chasing each other up and down the aisles.

At the front of the room, singing, were Bill Haley and the Comets.

It was a bizarre sight. "Rock Around the Clock" had been a hit in 1955, and Bill Haley had become famous all over the world, but by 1969 he was way out of fashion.

But there he was, sweating and smiling and singing that same song in a motel meeting room, while some of the people in the audience read the newspaper and others yawned.

I asked someone what was going on. I was told that Haley and the Comets were booked into the Newport's lounge that week. Part of the contract said that, on one evening, the band had to perform free in this meeting room. The idea was that the Newport's guests were provided with a different activity every evening after dinner. The social director would meet them in this room; one night it might be a magician, one night it might be dance lessons, one night it might be a bridge tournament. Tonight it was Bill Haley and the Comets.

I stood in the doorway and watched. As Haley held his guitar and sang "Rock Around the Clock," he had a ferocious grin on his face. The grin did not waver all through the song. I thought about all of the thousands of nights he must have sung those words, and about how tired of them he must be by now. Most of us can achieve something when we are young, then try to move on to something better.

But what of a Bill Haley? He had the misfortune of having the first hit rock and roll song, and no matter what he tried to do the rest of his life, he was expected to sing that song everywhere he went. It didn't matter what had happened in his own life in the years after 1955; it didn't matter that to the people in this meeting room tonight, his voice was just an echo out of the past, a half forgotten snippet from the soundtrack of their lives. If Haley was going to presume to be here 14 years later, then he'd better sing that song.

I found myself staring at that smile on his face, the grin that would not go away. It was clearly the device he had settled on, the mask that would make neutral all the questions about what was really going through his mind as he sang for the grandparents and children. The grin was so fierce that his face seemed about to crack.

Bill Haley died the other day. The stories in the papers said that he was 55, and that death had been of natural causes. Haley and his wife had been living in a retirement community in the Rio Grande Valley area of Texas, the stories said.

It was no wonder that he had stopped performing: every man has dreams, but what's the use when no one wants you to be anything other than the boy you were in 1955? A smile, the song and a spit curl; that's all that was ever required of Bill Haley, for he was involved in that strange commerce that is centered on reminding us of our memories.

It's funny; they say that a hit like "Rock Around the Clock" makes you immortal, but it's real effect is almost precisely the opposite. Bill Haley's obituaries appeared in 1981, but a part of him died in 1955; died and was buried, even while he tried to live on.

And now I think of that evening in Miami Beach. The old men and women talked to one another, and the children yelled and played on the floor, and there, at the front of a motel meeting room, Bill Haley closed his eyes and smiled in the night.