

opinion/editorial

Money for hostages is a futile attempt at justice

A presidential commission has recommended restitution be made to the Americans held hostage for 444 days in Iran. The commission recommended the hostages be paid \$12.50 per day for their ordeal.

The per day amount totals \$5,550 for those held the entire 444 days.

Jerry Plotkin, a businessman among those taken, would not be eligible for the benefits. The commission ruled private citizens who went to Iran after travel warnings were issued were on their own.

Meanwhile, seven Secret Service agents who helped save President Ronald Reagan from the assassination attempt on March 30 received compensation for their work on the job.

Four of the agents received \$10,000 each and the Treasury Department's exceptional service award.

In neither the hostage nor the Secret Service agent examples is monetary compensation an adequate reward for their services.

A Secret Service Agent's job is to protect the president. This is exactly what agent Tim McCarthy did when he used his body to protect the president from the gunfire.

But why call this a heroic deed? It was his duty to use his life to save the president's. Rewarding him or anyone else in the agency for performing their job is an admission that we don't expect these people to risk their lives without some monetary reward.

Paying the hostages a mere \$12.50 a day is a sham. No amount of money can compensate the hostages for what they endured.

Some say \$12.50 is a good "symbolic gesture." A lawyer for some hostages and their families is suggesting a minimum of \$1,000 a day as restitution.

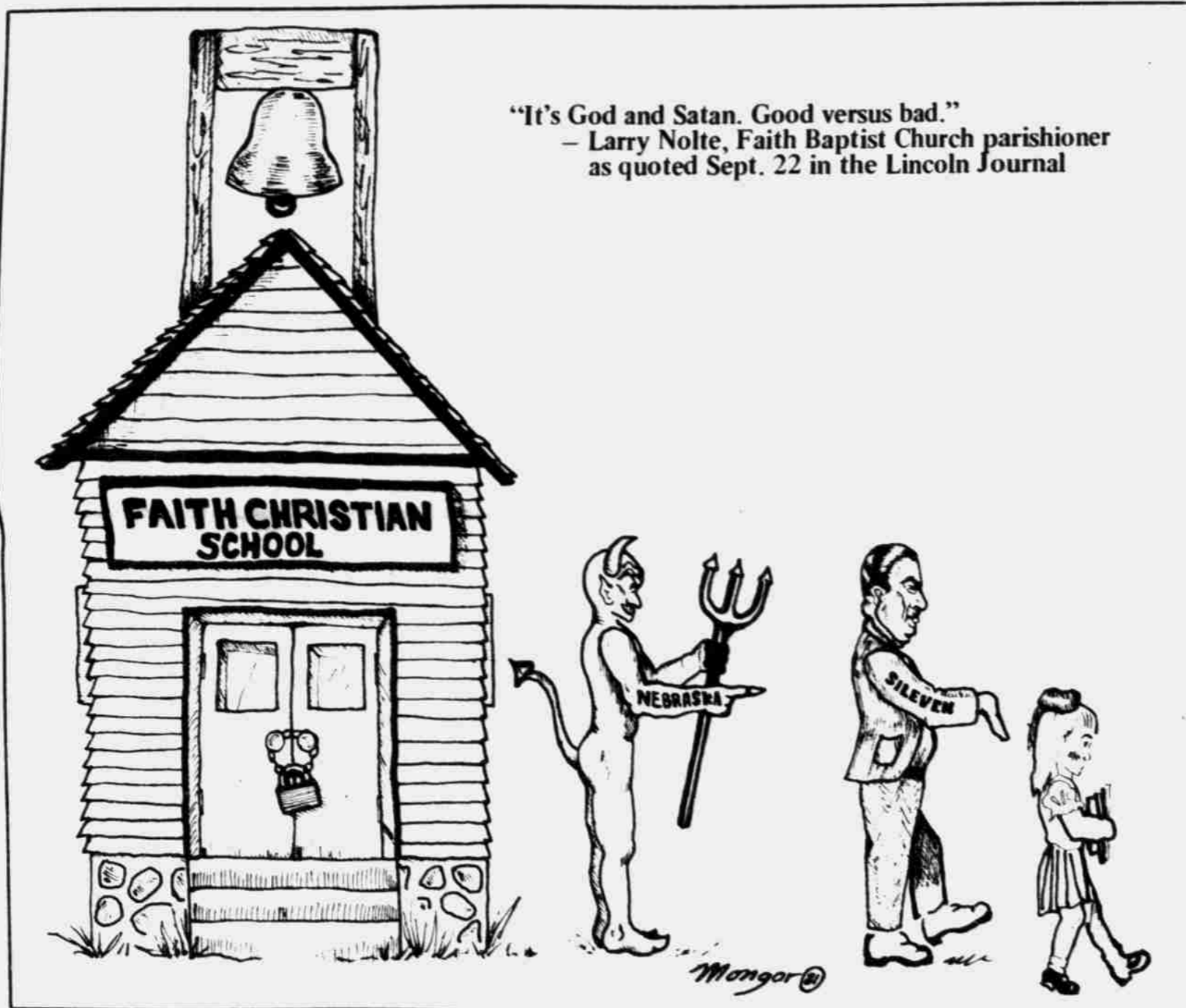
Few people believe money will help ease any mental anguish the hostages suffered. Yet we are willing to award these victims of circumstance money, although we turn our backs on others.

There are many other groups who could claim a right to some compensation.

Vietnam veterans and Japanese-Americans, whose civil liberties were denied during World War II, are just two groups. Many descendants of the first Americans, the Native Americans, would have a legitimate gripe about having their ancestors' land stolen by the U.S. government.

What happened to the hostages, the Vietnam veterans, and the Native Americans was unfair. But life is unfair and we must accept it.

And it is just as unfair to give money away to the hostages or Secret Service agents when it could be better spent on the entire country and not just one small group.



"It's God and Satan. Good versus bad."
— Larry Nolte, Faith Baptist Church parishioner
as quoted Sept. 22 in the Lincoln Journal

If you have to ask, you can't afford it

My wife, Glynda, came into a small inheritance. We decided to discover how the other 1 percent lives by going yachting.

"If you have to ask how much it costs to charter a 40-foot yacht," as J.P. Morgan once said, "you should be ashamed of yourself." It costs \$200 a day, not counting gin, Band-Aids and food, in that order of importance.

arthur hoppe

I was sorry we asked. "For that amount of money," said Glynda, who is terrified of any and all waters over four feet deep, "we could afford to sit in an ice-cube-filled bathtub and flagellate ourselves with chains."

But I pointed that we would be sharing this luxurious sailboat with our dear friends Captain and Mrs. Bligh (I have changed their names to protect our friendship). And thus it would cost us a mere \$100 a day to experience the sybaritic existence of the idle rich while cruising the magnificent fjords off The Inland Passage.

This bargain proved too much for Glynda to resist and I am thus able to report to you first hand how the idle rich live.

The idle rich arise each morning very early and very carefully. The reason for the latter is that the distance between my bunk and the shelf overhead is 26½ inches. The reason for the former is obscure.

But it seems there is always a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, requires getting up at some ungodly hour.

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Minorities rise fastest through market

I once saw a reference to Thomas Sowell in which he was described as "an economist who happens to be black." The tone was somehow wrong, as if his race were an incidental embarrassment, on the order of calling Marlene Dietrich an entertainer who happens to be female.

Sowell was in New York recently to promote his three new books. He is a sternly handsome man who looks much younger than his 51 years. He talks with the ease of a stand-up comedian.

Joseph Sobran

His basic thesis, as a commentator on public policy, is that ethnic minorities have always risen fastest through the free market, rather than through politics.

"I do not have faith in the market," he says. "I have evidence about the market." That evidence is amassed in *Ethnic America* and *Markets and Minorities*, two of his three current books.

As Sowell sees it, the market ignores the very factors of socially-ascribed inferior status that keeps minorities "in their place." Instead, it rewards them for what they do.

An employer who hired a less-qualified white over a more-qualified black is imposing upon himself what Sowell calls "the costs of discrimination," and leaving the superior job candidate to some competitor.

He points to such homely examples as the Washington Redskins of a few years back, who were the National Football League's whitest-and-worst-team. The costs of discrimination are inherent, he says, in a competitive sys-

tem. Therefore blacks should favor free competition.

The death of Roy Wilkins has been widely remarked on as signaling the end of the old civil rights movement. Current black leadership has abandoned the Wilkins-era stress on merit hiring and on opposing double standards, in favor of group entitlements and "Affirmative Actions" — divisive and, in Sowell's view, self-defeating policies.

What does Sowell advise blacks to do?

"I am not the Dear Abby of black people," he said. He dislikes talks of "solutions." In the real world there are only "alternatives," which must be compared with each other, not with some hypothetical ideal.

Sowell is an original thinker whose method is not easy to grasp, but he owes a heavy debt to Friedrich von Hayek, the Austrian economist whose epistemology of the marketplace forms the basis of Sowell's widely hailed book, *Knowledge and Decisions*.

He rejects the state-imposed "solutions" favored by liberalism and adopted, unfortunately, by most of the black establishment. This has not endeared him to that establishment; nor has his blunt ridicule of what he sees as its social elitism; nor has his penchant for independent theorizing.

Born in North Carolina, Sowell grew up in New York, dropped out of high school, joined the Marines and eventually got his doctorate in economics at the University of Chicago — where he gave over his early radicalism in favor of the free-market economics fostered by the Chicago school.

At one time he was an oddity, and his first teaching job was at a private women's college. But he made his mark, and last fall Ronald Reagan offered him a Cabinet position in the Department of Education.

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