

# Editorial

## Budget-cut victims left 'out in cold'

Nobody should be too surprised to discover that this winter has brought record cold temperatures; anybody who has had to step outside in Lincoln during the last couple of months can attest to that. For many people, those record cold temperatures have also meant record-high home heating bills, many of which probably could not have been paid without the program of federal heating bill subsidies for the poor.

But Ronald Reagan, under the banner of budget cutting and belt-tightening, wants to cut back the assistance program. This year's \$1.75 billion allocation already has proven inadequate, as 11 states have run out of their shares of the fund. The Reagan administration has proposed a \$1.3 billion allocation for next year, which, coupled with high unemployment, could leave a lot of Americans out in the cold next winter.

This move, combined with several of the latest "budget cuts," helps to paint a picture of the ultimate victim of the Reagan administration. He or she would probably be a factory worker, or at least somebody who had been a factory worker until the latest batch of layoffs forced by the recession. The paltry "tax break" this worker got when Reagan's tax-cut package passed last year will have been more than offset by the loss of income (a person with no income hardly needs to worry about income taxes). As this worker sits through the winter waiting for the promised economic recovery, the local utility company shuts off the home heating fuel because of overdue bills. In an effort to help this person in such a dire condition, the government generously provides a whole pound of surplus cheese.

Sure, this example overstates the burden that most people will have to shoulder. But the people who most need financial help are the very people to whom this assistance is aimed. To sacrifice the health and well-being of these people in the name of cutting the budget, while at the same time decontrolling fuel prices (so that they can go up) displays grossly misaligned priorities.

What will Reagan tell these people as they shiver through next winter? It will be extremely small comfort for them to know that their money is going for more Huey helicopters for El Salvador. He dare not tell them that America's greatness comes from surviving adversities like the Great Depression, because that would only remind them how close we are to another one. The going suspicion is that in this "put up or shut up" administration, the poor will do the putting up, and Reagan will do the shutting up.

## Feb. 14 needed to emphasize maintenance of love

The merchants are wearing their hearts on their shelves. It happens every year, just like calendar work. Out go the turkeys, in come the Santas; out go the Santas, in come the hearts.

In the candy shop you now have the chance to eat your heart out in assorted flavors. In the card racks, you can buy love cheap or dear, cute or chic. In the flower shop, the roses are red, the violets are blue, and the delivery is included.

I suppose this is an odd sort of holiday. Once it was a day for secret messages of affection. Now it's less myster-



Ellen Goodman

ious and more official. There are no marches, no fanfare, no speeches. But it's a public celebration for private emotions: National Pay Attention to Love Day.

And maybe we need it. Maybe we need to flag one day down every 365, and wave a banner of reassurance at each other — a white one with a red heart on it. Maybe we need to consciously stop the dailiness, call a halt to habits and notice a feeling, notice each other.

After all, love is always at risk from routine, always open to bankruptcy unless we keep up the regular payments of attention.

I've known a lot of people who make the first installment easy enough. Some fall in love down a chute of passion that absorbs all their energy and concentration. A few choose that ride over and over again, getting high on the intensity. But it doesn't have much staying power.

Sooner or later, most of us civilize love into a thing we can live with. Lovers become partners. The lens that



## Students need to speak up—frequently

Don't you know that it's a fool  
Who plays it cool  
By making his world a little colder?

—"Hey Jude," The Beatles

The minor uproar over cuts in the Recreation Department's budget was a relief from the usual shoulder-shurging around campus. A few people even allowed themselves the unpardonable indulgence of getting upset over something "political." At the risk of social suicide,



Matthew Millea

students are getting involved in an issue that affects their lives. They blush a bit, but they stand their ground. It's not as if they're unaware of the social norms in operation around here. I'm sure they realize they're being *really* uncool. But they had a choice to make, and they've made it. Given the choice between being victims or putting up a fight, they're becoming fighters.

It seemed inevitable that students at UNL would lose their cool. Humiliation has been heaped upon humiliation: A B-movie actor who thinks the rich aren't rich enough was elected president. The university's budget please were ignored with more than 30,000 of us studying and teaching less than a mile from where the decision were made. Eliminating open recreation at an institution which boasts some of the finest varsity sports facilities in the world had to be the last straw.

Jim Frohman, the student chairman of the Committee for Fees Allocation, which made the tentative cuts, was

was focused on creating a relationship becomes diffused in making a life.

We talk less about "us" and more about "them" children, parents, jobs, friends, appliances, ceiling leaks, bills. At times we just talk less.

There is something luxurious about being able to take another person for granted: something delicious in being boring together; something accepting in silence. But there's also something scary about it.

I don't know a soul who hasn't felt nostalgia for the intensity from time to time. I don't know a soul who hasn't wondered how quickly mutual comfort can pass over into mutual neglect.

I have a lot of busy friends. They share children, work, home. Sometimes their lives are divided like errands and they only meet in doorways, passing lists like batons. In weeks with very little leeway, what "gives" is their private life. It's easy to make a habit out of less and less.

But the ones who are most together are those who, somehow or other, against the odds, keep up their payments.

One couple I know has survived half-a-dozen life changes and retained that core of love: interest in each other. They watch their marriage together as if it were a stock portfolio. They spend time at it, as if it were golf or racquetball. They are as fascinated by their own relationship as by any project they could build together.

Another couple I know has simply made a pact to dun each other at least once a week for attention. Instead of wallowing in the silent sense of indebtedness, one or the other will take a chance, ask a question: Hello there, how are we doing? They have learned to strike a balance between neglect and demand.

I don't know why some people are better at paying up than others. Maybe they need more themselves. Maybe they like each other better. Maybe they are more fright-

elated to hear a petition had been started. Poor Jim can't get anyone to tell him how they'd like their money spent. He had a meeting for student input in November which was attended by two people.

Apathetic people are much more naive than they know. They believe they can't affect what happens and that if they could, it wouldn't be worth the time. The former belief has been proven wrong while the latter dardly deserves comment.

I visited the Nebraska Legislature Wednesday morning and was impressed with the open atmosphere. The senators mill around casually, evidently unguarded by any sort of Secret Service barrier. Their offices have nice big signs over the door, and they seem quite willing to discuss what's on your mind. Some of them even seem susceptible to an intelligent argument. (I seem to have convinced Howard Peterson that William Jennings Bryan is spinning in his grave at the mere mention of a return to the gold standard.)

All our attention has been focused on the federal government recently, but it is our own state senators who want to hear what's on your mind. For example, last year a bill was introduced to consolidate small school districts; it was expected to pass easily. But a couple of bus loads of parents showed up and the bill didn't have a chance.

"Well sure," you said, "but I don't have time to do stuff like that." Some people hire lobbyists to ensure their message gets across. But then they have more money than you. Ever wonder why?

Making your voice heard is even more important in times of scarcity and cutbacks. Politicians are like everyone else; they take the path of least resistance. If you don't speak up, you're just laying down so they can run over you. There's not as much grease as there used to be: We'd better start squeaking.

ened by the specter of separation, or of old age in a quiet living room where only the television set is talking.

But I do know that it's not an accident, it's an act of will. It's taking a stand for the care of pleasure and the maintenance of love. It's an offering of personal energy against the pull of lethargy.

And if we need a day to remind us that an installment is due, so be it. I'll take my payment this year in chocolate, thank you.

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