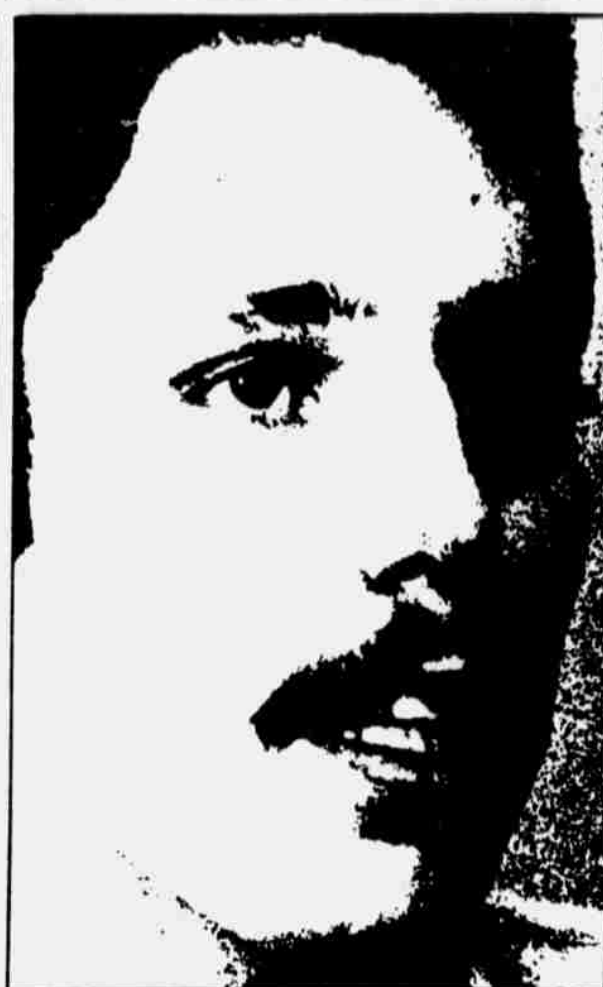


Editorial



Students can fight Regents Hall with their votes

Children.

That's what the NU Board of Regents thinks students are. Children who are unable to sort out issues and address them effectively.

And so, the regents believe it is their duty to guide and direct student's lives for them. They see no need to seriously consult students on issues that significantly affect their college careers and their futures.

Well, the regents are wrong.

Students do care about quality of education, faculty salaries, building maintenance, tuition and housing costs. Furthermore, students are fully capable of explaining and fighting for their views.

So, what has led the regents astray? What has given them the impression that students are apathetic and lack initiative? The consistently low voter turnouts at ASUN elections.

Students must shoulder some of the blame. When only about 10 percent of the student body goes to the polls, how can

student leaders persuade the regents that they represent the will of the student body?

The regents repeatedly refer to low voter turnout as an excuse for not listening to student concerns. Students have literally handed the board its most effective weapon in fighting student pressure. And, in the process, students have not only lost self-respect, but also any effect they had on concrete issues.

For example, the regents adamantly refuse to pay the student president a salary. They refuse to trust students with alcohol on campus. They deny our instructors the pay and academic freedom they need and in the same blow, deny students the education they have so dearly paid for. When students try to fight these battles, the regents drive back their forces with the cry, "Students don't really care."

Watching the candidates, the political maneuvering and the haggling over procedure in this year's election, a student could

easily think, "What difference will it make if I vote for one pretty face over another, for one unfamiliar name over another?"

The ASUN election often seems like just one more game for students to play. But in reality, the election is serious stuff. It's the one time students can make a difference.

If students would turn out in large numbers on election day, the student president and ASUN senators would face the regents and administrators with a real constituency. They could say the student body stood together and supported them. With that sort of backing, student leaders would gain respect, and perhaps students could gain some leverage over those who control the pursestrings and the policy at this university.

So, don't pass a polling booth Wednesday and think, "What's the use?"

Your vote *does* matter. With it, the student body could beat the regents at their own game and take its rightful place in university affairs.

asun election

NSSA should be reapproved

UNL students will vote Wednesday on continued membership in the Nebraska State Student Association. The Innocents Society, a UNL senior honorary, encourages students to vote yes for a continued 50 cents per semester refundable membership fee.

Last March, students at UNL voted to form the NSSA and fund it for two years. Because of a UNL administration decision, students at UNL will be required to vote again this year on funding.

Students at Peru State College also voted to form the NSSA last March and since that time, the UNL and Wayne State campuses also have voted to join. In addition, students at Kearney State will be deciding on membership

Guest Opinion

March 30. The NSSA has spent an ambitious first year organizing Nebraska students, and has just hired two experienced, professional staff members, who are representing students full time.

The NSSA advocates the interests of students at the legislative level. Proposed cuts in financial aids, for example, could price many students out of an education, and so the NSSA has begun lobbying against cuts in needed financial aids. The NSSA will also be dealing with the availability of financial aids to students from agricultural families. Presently, financial aid formulas exclude families with large property holdings, regardless of real student need, which discriminates against many rural students.

Another concern facing students is the declining quality of education. Meager legislative appropriations have translated into low faculty salaries and an actual 2 percent cut in university faculty and staff. UNL will have difficulty maintaining quality faculty if its faculty salaries remain the lowest in the Big Eight. Students will continue having difficulty obtaining needed classes if the university cannot increase its faculty as student enrollment increases.

For years, students have tried to influence Nebraska legislators. Individual campuses have made occasional lobbying efforts, but students have often been frustrated by a lack of organization and continuity. On a year-to-year basis, legislators have not had regular student liaisons. Individual campuses have often fought each other for appropriations, negating the potential for a collective student voice.

The NSSA has a full-time staff that can work with legislators on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, the staff can coordinate efforts across the state, such as voter registration drives and legislative lobbying efforts. This sort of organization is impressive to legislators, and in fact the NSSA has already been asked to draft a legislative proposal for the distribution of state financial aids.

In times of fiscal austerity, education tends to be an all-too-vulnerable target. However, on Wednesday students will have an opportunity to bolster their support for education. Looking ahead, the Innocents Society repeats the NSSA philosophy, that education is an investment in Nebraska's future.

The Innocents Society

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