

Editorial

Gesture noble but misguided; fight needed to regain salary

Bob Fitzgerald doesn't want to be a martyr.

Fitzgerald, the second vice president of ASUN, is giving up his salary for the 1982-83 school year because ASUN President Dan Wedekind is not getting paid.

But, Fitzgerald said Thursday morning, he doesn't want people to think he's saying "poor me." He doesn't want to publicize the trouble he's having surviving without a salary, but he will answer questions about it when asked.

Any of us in the same situation would have ample cause to complain. Fitzgerald has lost 15 pounds since taking office this spring. As of noon Thursday, he'd eaten three meals during the entire week. And he's seeking an evening part-time job — to go to after a full day of classes and ASUN duties.

He says he's refusing his \$932 yearly salary for religious and philosophical reasons. Because Wedekind is not being paid what is supposed to be a \$1,356 yearly salary — withheld by order of the NU Board of Regents — Fitzgerald is not accepting his paychecks.

While Fitzgerald's action is noble and well-meaning, it's probably a strategic mistake.

Declining the salary says to the regents, "Look, we'll hold office, fulfill our duties and represent our constituents without being paid. We can do our job with or without the salary."

Not fighting encourages the regents to continue acting in violation of law and legal advice.

The law: A provision in the state constitution states that non-voting student members of the Board of Regents (which is what Wedekind is) shall receive no compensation. It does not say the student regent and president jobs are one in the

same.

The legal opinion: Richard Wood, NU attorney, was asked about the legality of withholding pay from student body presidents on the grounds that the president is also a regent. In a June 9, 1980, letter to the board, Wood said "the constitutional prohibition does not, in my opinion, extend to compensation received by a student body president for... duties .. which are totally unrelated to service on the Board of Regents."

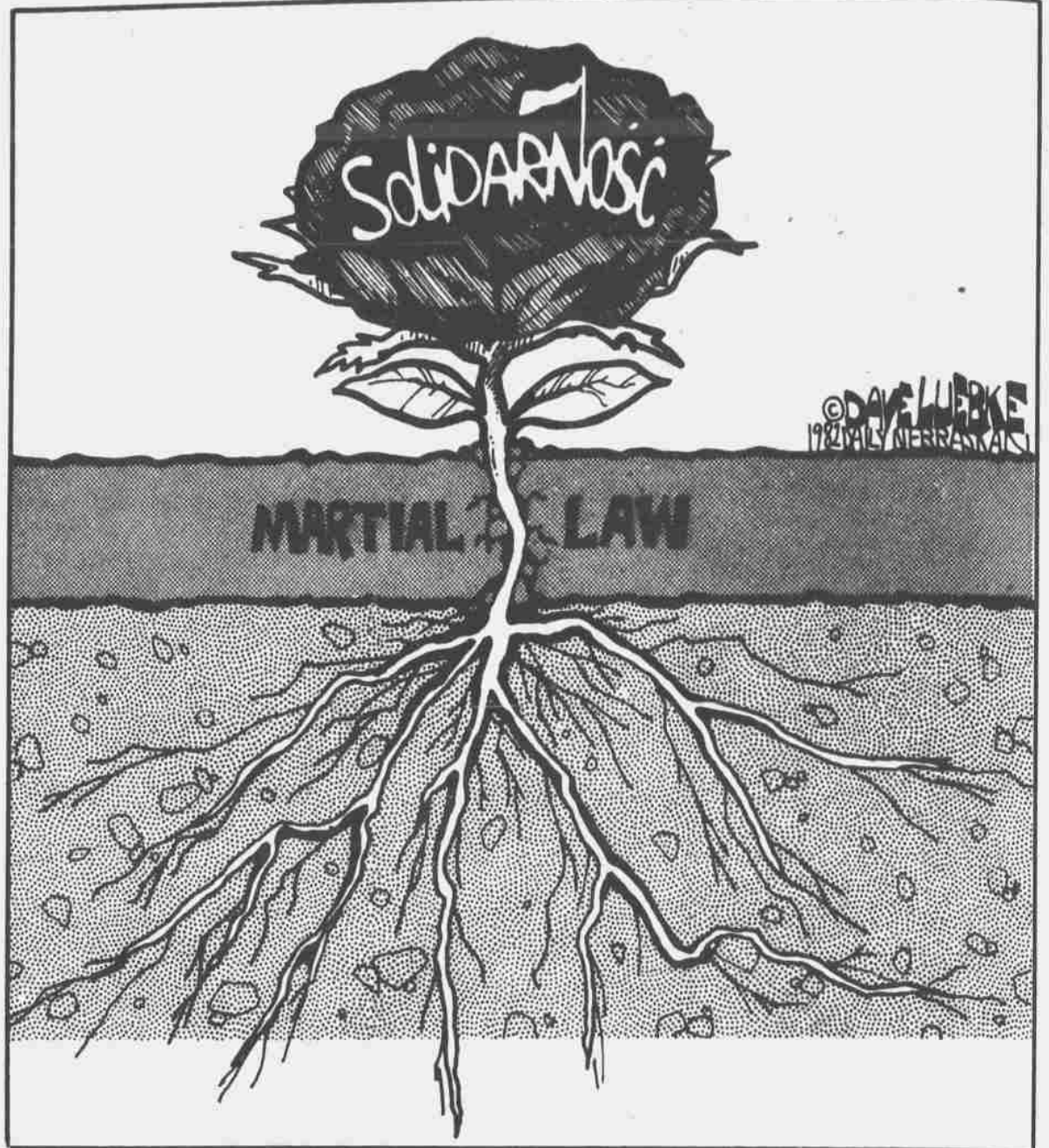
Soon after receiving that opinion, the board opted to ignore Wood's counsel and said the ASUN president could not be paid.

Some say the action was a figurative slap on the face to former ASUN President Renee Wessels. The regents were not fond of Wessels' sometimes combative style.

But Wessels did not suffer because of the action. Neither did last year's president, Rick Mockler. Wedekind is the first to have his salary withheld. And he, like Wedekind, is suffering. According to Fitzgerald and earlier Daily Nebraskan reports, Wedekind has taken a second job and is working weekends and some afternoons to support himself and his pregnant wife.

Since the regents have made the salary a political issue, Fitzgerald and Wedekind ought to adopt a little political savvy of their own. Now, when the 1980 decision has finally hit, is not the time to forget the issue.

If Fitzgerald and Wedekind let the matter drop without a fight, the position of president may remain permanently unsalaried. Then only those students who have the financial means to hold non-paying, full-time jobs can serve. That would substantially narrow the field of candidates.



Bumper stickers drive home the common man's message

In an unprepossessing office building on the North Side of Chicago sits one of the world's best-selling authors. He talks in a gruff, gravelly voice, and no one outside his own family would recognize his name. But his works of literature are read all over America.

"I'm thinking all the time," said Bill Harris, 62. "I'm thinking here at the office, I'm thinking while I'm driving in my car, I'm thinking while I'm in bed. I keep a note pad by the side of my bed.

"What do I think of in bed? Let me give you a for-instance. I'm sleeping one night, and all of a sudden I wake up with an inspiration. My wife, Beverly, is used to this . . .

"Here is the line: 'BUSINESS IS SO GOOD I COULD PUKE.' Right away I



Bob Greene

know I got a winner. I write it down. The next day I put it into production. And now it's one of our biggest sellers."

What Bill Harris does is write bumper stickers. He is the author of a huge percent-

age of the allegedly humorous bumper stickers you see on America's highways and back roads; he estimates that his company, the Moderne Card Co., produces 80 percent of the bumper stickers in the "humorous" category. He lets someone else write the political and cause-oriented stickers.

"I've been doing this since 1947," he said. "I've written maybe 1,000 different bumper stickers in 35 years, and they've sold maybe 15 million copies. They go for a buck a bumper sticker these days.

"The rule is, you got to keep it short. A bumper sticker is only 12 inches long. You try to get too complicated or to say too much, you lose your readers. I spend all day editing. Shorten, shorten, shorten. My whole life is spent shortening what I write.

"But what I come up with sells. I'll hear somebody say something, or hear a snatch from a song, and I'll think: 'There's a bumper sticker.'

"And then I'll refine it. I'm very proud of my work. I have my favorites. 'POLICE OFFICERS NEVER COP OUT.' 'BANKERS DO IT WITH INTEREST.' 'IF YOU TOUCHA MY CAR, I BREAKA YOU FACE.'

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Letters

Israel not the meek in Mideast

I am amazed at the simple mindedness of Americans like Murray Frost (letter to the editor, Aug. 30 Daily Nebraskan), who still believe that Israel is the meek in the Middle East problem.

The writer said Israel is a small nation that has faced hostility since its creation in 1948. I agree that Israel has faced hostility but attitudes and views have changed since 1948.

Frost wrote that the Palestine Liberation Organization was rejecting negotiations. I would point out that the United States would not talk to them nor would the Israelis. At least 10 peace plans were

proposed in the recent Israeli-Lebanon conflict, but not one was given by Israel. Does this seem like a nation that wants peace?

The writer also remembers Yasser Arafat as a terrorist and the man who asked for the Holy War against Israel. I would like to juggle Frost's memory further and ask what did Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin do during Nazi occupation of Warsaw and also against the Ben Gurion government in Israel? Wasn't that classified as terrorism?

Ali Quraishi
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U.S. defense contractors: Wealth before security

"If it hadn't been for taxes, we couldn't have handled our profits with a stream shovel." — a Todd Shipbuilding Corp. executive testifying before the Special Senate Committee investigating the National Defense Program in 1940.

It is now 1982, but the majority of defense contractors are still having trouble hauling away their profits. The special committee headed by then-Sen. Harry S. Truman



Matthew Millea

more than 40 years ago uncovered trends in defense spending which have only accelerated since then.

The committee findings, as Truman recalled in volume one of "Memoirs by Harry S. Truman," sound somewhat familiar: "The committee found that leadership in both labor and (defense) industry had been too concerned with its own interests and too little concerned with the national welfare . . . I felt that many demands for wage increases were inspired by the reports of horrendous profits being made by defense contractors."

The profits being made by defense contractors, then and now, were indeed amoral and unpatriotic. From Truman's memoirs: "We found that the Navy was extremely liberal with the private shipbuilders. Nine of 13 companies which had cost-plus-fixed-fee contracts were entitled to receive fees, plus special bonuses, which exceeded the amount of their net worth (emphasis mine) on Dec. 31, 1939, as estimated by them . . . In one case it (net profit) exceeded by nearly 800 times their average annual net profit; in other cases by 20, 30 and 40 times the average annual net profits."

The primary reason the defense industry has been able to continue sponging the American people is the now time-honored practice of issuing cost-plus contracts.

Instead of encouraging defense contractors to deliver the best product for what the government decides it can afford to pay, the Pentagon demands the best weaponry, regardless of price. It seems time to re-evaluate this practice.

Rather than constantly assaulting social programs, the David Stockman crowd might do well to look out from under their noses out there on the West Coast. (As Truman warned in Merle Miller's oral biography ("Plain Speaking"), "all through history it's the nations that have

given the most to the generals and the least to the people that have been the first to fall.")

Take McDonnell Douglas as an example. This aircraft builder provides jets for aircraft carriers at the cost of \$25 million per plane. That's a few million more than the bid they submit to the government. Apparently some of the boys at the Pentagon are suspecting that McDonnell Douglas might be taking advantage of their trust (in the form of a generous cost-plus contract.) The government even went so far as to threaten to buy a different model from Grumman, another aircraft manufacturer, at the bargain-basement rate of \$22 million per jet. (It's probably just a threat though. Everyone knows a \$22 million jet isn't as good as a \$25 million one, right?)

The point is that all of this could be avoided if the government would play by the same rules business has to. You don't hand people a blank check. Why not stipulate to the companies that they must build a plane for less than \$10 million a copy? If, as you would expect, the companies presented prototypes that sold for that price, officials could choose the most effective model.

The contractor would then be required to provide the equipment at the stipulated price. Now isn't that the "American Way" these planes are bought to protect?