

# Editorial

## Economics: Game of some winners, double-digit losers

A single adjective can shake a nation. *Bubonic* is an example of one. *Double-digit* is another.

The term *double-digit* first came into vogue as a pejorative back in the '70s when double-digit inflation raised its nasty, spiraling head. Since then, thanks to the interest rates of the '80s, the adjective has become laughably quaint.

That was until last Friday when the U.S. Department of Labor reported that we now officially live in a nation of double-digit unemployment for the first time since the recovery years of the Great Depression. It is perhaps the scariest use of the term yet. It should rattle the knees of Joe and Jane America. It is like "The Return of the Son of Double-Digit Bad Economy," in Sensaround, come to life.

I don't mean to be an alarmist. It is only an adjective. Double-digit just means "more than or equal to 10." It could have been 6.5 percent, which was enough to worry Lyndon Johnson. It could have been 17 percent. Instead, rather arbitrarily, it is 10 percent.

But imagine this. Last Thursday, if the fingers on your hands were those of an average American, the chances were better than 50-50 that all 10 of them would have been employed. Today, the odds favor that at least one of your fingers is unemployed. At some point, you must become concerned.

Those 11.3 million people can't all want to be poor. If all the jobless would get in single file and allow each other two feet, the unemployment line would run down one lane of Interstate 80 all the way to San Francisco. The other lane would be backed up from the Bay area to Cleveland. It might be silly, but it could make a point.

The line wouldn't even include "those too discouraged to look for a job. And, say you wanted to seat them all in Memorial Stadium. You would need more than four comparable stadiums in every county of Nebraska just to get the "too-discouraged" out of the aisles.

If all the jobless and discouraged were made residents, they would be the fourth largest state in the country. That is a lot of votes.

President Reagan has said, "I'm willing to accept the responsibility for the 2.7 percent increase if the others accept the responsibility for the 7.4 percent." He was referring to the 7.4 percent unemployment rate in the United States when he took office two years ago, in 1980, when the State of Unemployment would have only been the ninth biggest in the country. His attitude strikes me as a bit cavalier.

Even if double-digit is an arbitrary designation, it means something symbolically. It must if the Democrats can be having such fun playing political football with it right now. I see it rather symbolically, too. I see it as the dark side of supply-side economics and as a bipartisan failing.

Martin Feldstein, chairman-designate of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors, called the 10.1 percent unemployment rate "a statistical side effect" and blamed unemployment benefits. "We're not looking for any significant improvement," he said, "until we're into the recovery for several months."

When even Joe and Jane America know economics is complex stuff, it frightens me to see the persistent belief in some that a specific cure can isolate and remedy a specific problem, plus or minus statistical side effects. They apparently see the economy as more akin to a steady machine than to a growing organism about which little is fully understood. I lean toward the second view and fear blind stabs could be bad medicine. It is like letting barbers be doctors.

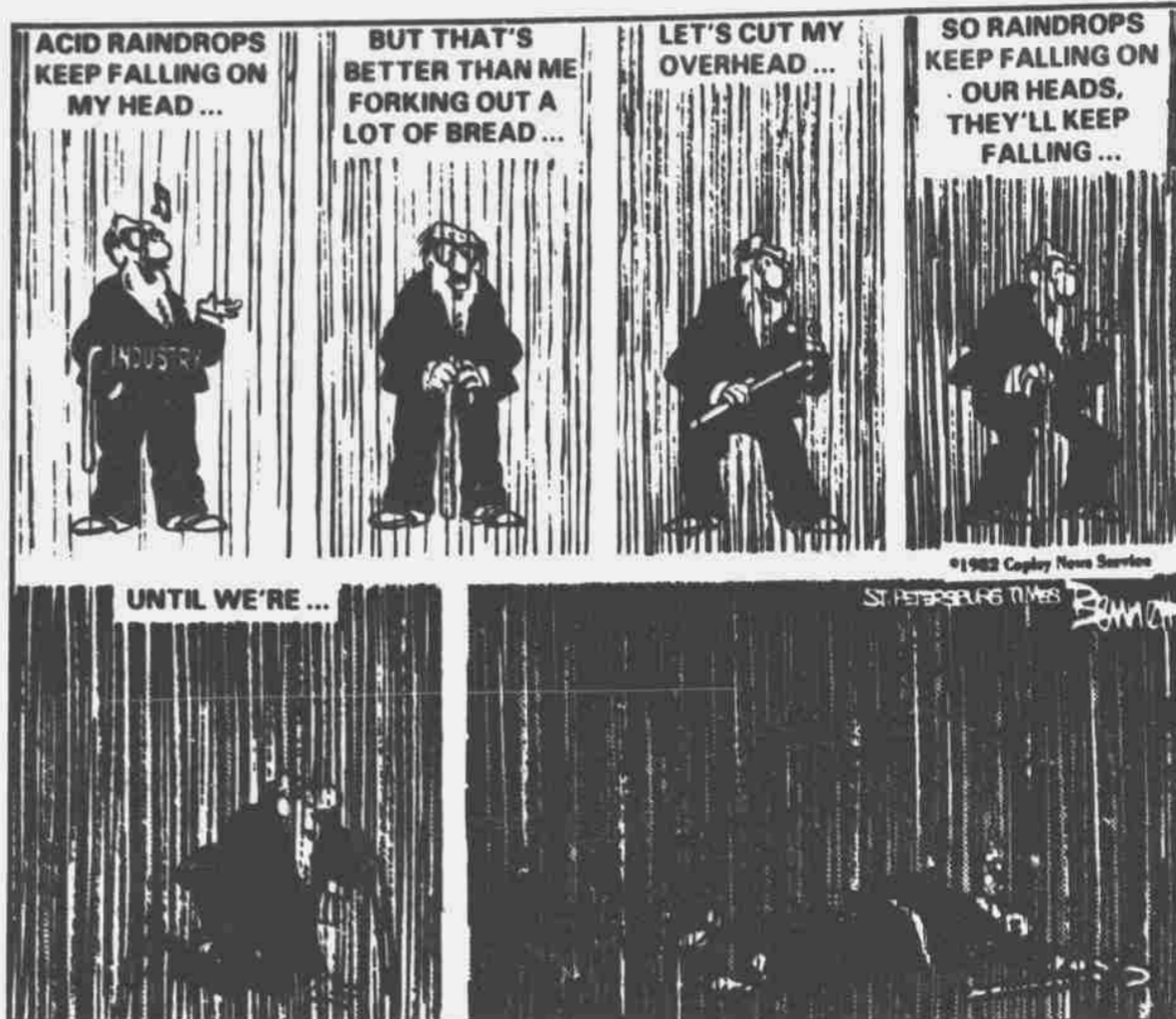
"The economy is not a machine," liberal economists Lester Thurow and Robert Heilbroner have written in their book "Five Economic Challenges." "The parts of the economy . . . are always people. The repairs . . . are always political. The decisions are . . . moral."

Thurow, prominent debater of supply-side economics, has the idea that an economy is almost like a game played with a set number of chips. Turns consist of swapping these. In every exchange, there is always both a winner and a loser.

Hard times are when, overall, everyone loses. The game is fairest if everyone relinquishes chips equally or proportionally. Inflation is somewhat comparable to this situation. Unemployment, on the other hand, distributes the hardship far less democratically. Instead the burden falls on perhaps the politically weakest members of society, the double-digit unemployed, the statistical side effect, "those who are unwillingly drafted to be the inflation fighters," as Thurow and Heilbroner have written.

There are 11.3 million such draftees now. If every unemployed American were a drop of water, the stone beneath them would be wearing thin.

David Wood



## Letters policy

The Daily Nebraskan encourages brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available in the newspaper.

Letters sent to the newspaper for publication become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

Submit all material to the Daily Nebraskan, Room 34, Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588.

## Thone's promises are deceptive

### "Portrait of a Flip-Waffle-Flopper"

Campaign rhetoric, loud hyperbole emphasized his iron will;

"He'll face up to any issue — simple, difficult, run of the mill."

He was asked: "Is your name THONE?" A-tremble he began to blink-so;

Said: "Emphatically, unequivocally, positively, — uh, I



Jeff Allen

think so. . .?"

— By State Sen. Ernest Chambers of Omaha

### "Untitled"

Rarely may the recipient of Chambers-lesque verse Breathe with ease as Chambers does curse.

As in this case the recipient of such

Is Governor Thone, the waffling miss-much.

Yet freely he breathes or apparently so

To his campaign he believes this verse not a blow.

How can he dare? Why doesn't he hide?

Will his deceptions with taxes the public abide?

By Jeff Allen

Deceptions? To call them anything less would be a lie. For that matter, to call them anything more would be to call them "lies" and with three weeks remaining until the general election the term "lies" is a bit much. Perhaps it would be best to reconsider the past to determine the most fitting description.

## Israel taking a 'bum rap' for killings

About the enormities in Lebanon's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, some observations:

The wincing mind and weeping heart recoil before the shootings there — the monstrous murder, the orgy of random killing, the systematic execution of whole families. By near unanimity, the atrocities are believed to have been carried out principally by the Damour Brigade



Ross Mackenzie

of Lebanon's Christian Phalange.

The major reason most often advanced is revenge for the blowing up of Phalange leader (and Lebanon's president-elect) Bashir Gemayel, and the 1976 slaughter of the residents of Damour, a Lebanese Christian town; the Damour Brigade consists primarily of Damour's survivors.

Yet in the aftermath of Sabra and Shatila, the essential complaint is not being leveled at the perpetrators of these horrors, but at Israel.

No sooner did the world learn about Sabra and Shatila than the engines of outrage were oiled and fueled and set to work spewing out hysteria about the guilt of Israel. Defense Minister Ariel Sharon is called a butcher. Prime Minister Menachem Begin is likened to Hitler. Self-appointed moral purists are demanding that one or both resign.

The alleged reason for Israeli guilt is that the Israeli army, knowing what the Phalangists would do, allowed them to enter the camps. Yet to make such an allegation

Recently Lincoln Journal reporter Thomas Fogarty recapped the past 12 months of the Thone administration's fiscal history in an article titled "Revenue déjà-vu," what follows are paraphrases from Fogarty's article.

Oct. 6, 1981. State agency directors were informed that because of meager tax receipts only 45 percent of the expected 50 percent of their six month budgets would be appropriated. Then news came from Thone's budget director.

Oct. 26, 1981. Thone issued a call for a special session to cut the budget by \$25 million.

March 26, 1982. Thone said no increase in the 3 percent sales tax rate would be necessary.

April 7, 1982. Thone aides lobby the Legislature for a increase in the sales tax from 3 percent to 3.5 percent and Thone signs the legislation raising the tax until Jan. 1, 1983.

April 29, 1982. The State Board of Equalization approved a 2 percent increase in state individual income tax. Thone is the presiding member of the board.

Oct. 7, 1982. Faced with considerably larger revenue shortfalls than last year, Thone announced that agencies would receive only 45 percent of the appropriations rather than the full 50 percent during the first six months of the current fiscal year. He said he would call a special budget-cutting session of the Legislature in November, if necessary and promised not to increase tax rates.

Sound familiar? Candidate Thone has perceived that it is in his personal, political best interest to deliver on his four year promise to Nebraska's electorate that he "will not raise taxes, no way." Thone has broken that promise three times in the past year and he intends to mislead voters

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is to indulge the meanest malice. The Israeli army authorized entry into the camps for the purpose of ferreting out 2,500 PLO guerrillas believed to have remained in West Beirut in violation of the American-arranged evacuation accords. To suggest that the Israelis knew what the Christians would do is to fly in the face of every moral tenet for which Israel stands. Nevertheless, that is precisely the suggestion — precisely the specific charge.

For this startling conclusion, there are two fundamental causes. First, Israel is, well, *Israel* — the Jewish state. Its every action touches the deep-running river of anti-Semitism that flows within too many of this world's inhabitants. Bitter hatred of Jews accounts in part for the animosity toward Israel now.

Second, Israel, the unpardonable state, has committed the unpardonable sin, so it is hated doubly. It has defeated a communist enemy. About this let there be no doubt. The Palestine Liberation Organization may be financed mostly by the Saudis. But it is armed by the Soviets, and its Leninist leaders are devoutly loyal to the Kremlin.

Rarely has an in-place communist regime been defeated. And when such an enterprise is defeated, the victor — in this case, Israel — must be made to pay and pay and pay in the theater of world opinion, so that it will not dare (will not be allowed) to win again.

In a swift stroke, then, Sabra and Shatila have accomplished a number of things potentially devastating not only for Israel, but for the entire free world. Israel was born in the belief that its people's singular historical ordeal would render the new country the world's moral exemplar. The mere imputation of Israeli complicity in Sabra and Shatila undermines Israel's moral legitimacy.

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