

Editorial

James Watt should honor his promises

Secretary of the Interior James Watt has said many times that if he ever becomes an embarrassment to President Reagan, he will step down.

That time has come and Watt should honor his promise.

He recently told the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that he has received advice on the issue of leasing federal lands for coal mining from "every kind of mixture."

"I have a black, I have a woman, two Jews and a cripple," he said.

The statement may have been Watt's idea of a joke, but it showed all Americans just how much disregard he has for human equality.

But we probably shouldn't be surprised. His recent remark was only the latest in a long line of offensive statements.

The kind of insensitivity not only is an embarrassment to Reagan; it is an embarrassment to the Republican Party and to everyone who supports the president.

Everyone knows about Watt's environmental policies. His total disregard for nature has offended many, but somehow, he has managed to maintain enough support to remain in government and be a semi-effective leader.

But his recent statement should be acceptable to no one. It could do far more damage to his reputation than any policy decision he ever made.

Watt may have hurt his political image beyond repair, and he likely will find few supporters in Washington because of that.

Without that support, Watt will find his effectiveness as a leader severely limited and his usefulness as a member of the Reagan administration will be minimal.

Watt poses a big political liability to a president who already has an image of being insensitive to the needs of minorities. That could be costly for Reagan if he decides to run again in 1984.

It simply isn't wise for a politician, especially one seeking re-election, to be associated with Watt or his policies.

So, it's time for Watt to realize just how much of an embarrassment he is and to fulfill his promise to resign.

If he does not, Reagan should not hesitate to take steps on his own to rid the administration of James Watt once and for all.



An old contender tries again

By now the old cars have gone to the automobile graveyards, carrying with them the bumper stickers, "Don't blame me, I'm from Massachusetts."

The college students who heard George McGovern announce that he will run again for president were barely in grammar school during the season of 1972. They know about Vietnam and Watergate from history classes.



Ellen Goodman

To them and to the press in the room at George Washington University last week, McGovern was the man who had once been a "contender." He lost the Democratic nomination to Hubert Humphrey in 1968, lost the election to Richard Nixon in 1972 (when he carried only Massachusetts and the District of Columbia), lost his Senate seat in 1980 and now he is trying to get back in the ring again, to win the title as comeback kid of 1984.

It's no wonder that while the other Democratic candidates worry about money and strategy, McGovern's first priority is not to appear ridiculous. The one reason he hesitated to run for president was, as McGovern told the Washington Post, "the fear of ridicule... the fear of just looking like a Don Quixote and a kind of you know, 'Jesus! Not George again...'"

The press asked him what they asked each other. Wasn't he afraid of being "Stassenized," turned into a

perennial candidate like that other contender until he was his own and only camp follower? Even his daughter, Mary McGovern, said that "there were concerns he might get hurt again." And a former aide said of his candidacy, "It makes a lot of us very uncomfortable."

This is the thing of course. The man McGovern may be articulate, cool, sensible; surely he wins points for the way he handles his wife's reluctance to campaign. But the candidate McGovern engenders some familiar anxiety.

I suppose it's the same anxiety that we feel when a former star, rusty and with a recent string of bad reviews, steps up to hit a ball or a note. We don't know if he'll make it. We hold our breath, hoping that we won't have to witness his humiliation, and wishing that he'd never tried.

None of us knows precisely the moment when someone who has lost a few will finally become a loser. At what point do we wish that a batter in a slump wouldn't even get up to the plate anymore? When does someone who once gathered attention begin to garner embarrassment?

It's hard enough to assess and accept the slippage in our own skills and powers. We all hope we'll be aware when it's our time to go, whether we're leaving the stage or the field or a job or a relationship. But it's particularly painful to see others, slipping and scrambling, hoping for the big comeback. We are embarrassed when we witness people lusting after the things that have passed them by, whether those "things" are youth or looks or power.

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Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the fall 1983 Daily Nebraskan. They are written by this semester's editor in chief, Larry Sparks.

Other staff members will write editorials throughout the semester. They will carry the author's name after the final sentence.

Racism exists — though not in charters

Sorority system discriminates against blacks

Some of the most outstanding women in Nebraska take part in one of the most degrading practices known to humankind. Two Miss Nebraskas (that I know of) are a part of it. So is Miss Nebraska Rodeo and several of the outstanding student leaders who were elected to Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and other campus organizations. Many of the present and past New Student Orientation hosts are a part of it.



Bill Allen

These are women you wouldn't expect to take part in this kind of activity.

Be that as it may, the sorority system is racist. It discriminates against blacks.

This isn't to say that every woman in a sorority is prejudiced or racist, but by being a part of an institution that is, doesn't she set herself up for that kind of assumption?

At the beginning of last fall's semester, I was talking to a friend I've known since high school. We hadn't seen each other in quite a while and she was

filling me in on things, including the sorority rush that was taking place.

I asked her how it was going.

Great, she said, and imagine this, she added, we had a black girl rush our house — as if she had any chance of getting in, she said.

She laughed. I didn't.

I felt what has been described as a "sour feeling" toward someone I thought I knew, and drifted out of the conversation with an excuse about having to be somewhere else.

Sadly, that was really the first time I was aware of the situation. It's pretty obvious that this discrimination takes place, though I doubt you would see it written in any sorority charter.

Just recently, I was talking with a freshmen woman who had pledged a sorority. She was describing some of the things the women who were active in the house were showing the pledges in their meetings, including etiquette, which I thought was amusing, nothing more.

She was really trying hard, it seemed, to make me like the fact that she had pledged.

I asked her how many blacks were in her pledge class.

She said none were.

"There was only one black girl (notice the use of the word girl) that went through rush," she said. "I

don't know why that is."

It's not hard to figure out. Maybe this particular black woman wasn't aware of the standing social order. Maybe she was, but for some reason, wanted to give it a shot anyway.

I asked the woman I was talking to whether she knew to which house the black woman was accepted.

She didn't know. I don't either. But I can guess she wasn't accepted by any.

The sorority idea in itself is not objectionable. The ideas of togetherness, friendship, tradition and functioning as a group are worthwhile goals. It seems appalling, then, to taint all these positive attitudes with one as fundamentally wrong as racism.

Perhaps many women in sororities aren't aware that they are adding to an already decadent situation.

For instance, it's a shame that blacks have to sponsor a separate Miss Black UNL pageant.

It's hard to believe that in the state of Nebraska there is not one black woman who deserves to be in an institution supposedly designed to accept outstanding young women.

It would be nice, since this is not 1850, or 1950, if the women presently in sororities would depledge, or deactivate, to protest this blatant discrimination. It would be great if sororities welcomed all women.