

Editorial

Money talks — sometimes too much

Needless to say, money talks. The amount of money lobbying groups spend to influence Congressmen is astronomical. In the last quarter of this year, lobbyists spent about \$12 million in attempts to sway the opinions of our country's legislators, according to an Associated Press story in *The Lincoln Star* Nov. 22.

That adds up to be about a 36-percent increase in spending from the first three months of 1983. And AP predicts that the cost could rise even higher next quarter.

The headline of the article read "Cost of influencing Congress skyrockets." Like any commodity, influence in Congress costs money. And because the customers are industrial giants and massive lobbying organizations, they can afford to pay the price.

That headline was indicative of a general complacency I sense about the buying and selling of political power. Our political machine is shamelessly greedy, and easily influenced by lobbyists and advertising campaigns.

American Telephone & Telegraph, almost the entire insurance industry and a whole passel of right and left wing lobbying conglomerates influence congressmen (buy votes) with advertising, and mailings to voters in districts represented by key legislators.

Nothing illegal about it. But since the insurance industry, AT&T and industry in general possess the

greatest bulk of money, the lower class segment of our society is left without a way to "influence" their elected congressman. A letter from Joe Smith of Lincoln just doesn't have the impact that a concerted \$2 million lobbying campaign has.

Limits should be placed on the amount of money lobbying groups can spend to influence our legislators. The people of the districts should have the greatest influence on legislators, not industry.

The imbalanced lobbying situation seems small when compared to the buy and sell techniques of the pervasive and persuasive Political Action Committees that have spread throughout Washington. PACs place large amounts of money into campaign funds in order to secure "influence." Unless a candidate is already a multi-millionaire, he or she at one time or another will have to nuzzle up to one of these organizations for money.

Hence, our government represents rich people. It represents those who can buy votes through PACs and lobbyists. The politicians usually are rich, too. The lower classes of our society still have the vote, but without organization and lots of money, their votes aren't very influential.

The only way to curb the spending is to put limits on it — limits for congressmen and presidential candidates. Don't count on it, though. Unless the "Curb Political Spending Coalition" can get an organized lobbying effort and form a PAC, I doubt Congress will take the thought into consideration.

— Chris Welsch



Letters

One nation, under Reagan, indivisible. . .

Our country is not a "democracy." You will not find the word "democracy" in our Constitution, in our Declaration of Independence or in any of our state constitutions.

Technically, the United States is a representative "Republic."

In a democracy everybody votes on everything; mob rule.

In a republic we elect men to make decisions in our behalf.



Paul Harvey

Theoretically, we elect our best men. So, socially, we are a democracy — "equal rights under the law."

But politically, we are a Republic. . . and to the Republic for which it stands. . .

Then came the autumn of 1983 when we, the people, made ourselves heard — and we prevailed! President Reagan's public approval rating was trailing that of both Mondale and Glenn.

Politicians, looking to an election year, were sniping at him. Including some within his own party. Then — when he dispatched American forces to

Grenada — politicians, pundits and professors condemned the "hip-shooting cowboy president who was surely leading us into war."

But then they heard from you.

You, the people, began to call and wire the White House and the Congress, to respond to television and telephone surveys.

And you supported the president — two-to-one, then five-to-one, then eight-to-one.

And what do you know! Suddenly our nation's leaders became followers; both the elected and the self-appointed.

Until the most recent tally showed you supporting the president two-to-one. . . By then, even Tip O'Neill reversed himself 360 degrees to concede, "The United States' invasion of Grenada was justified. . ."

A president with lesser charisma could not accomplish what this one is accomplishing.

For a president to sell an economic philosophy of "less government handouts" and a foreign policy of "intervention" requires a personal magic which our nation has not experienced since Franklin Roosevelt.

Our American system of government — whatever its designation and its imperfections — is still able to reflect the good sense of Main Street.

The high and the mighty got humbled when you used Western Union, Ma Bell and the professional nose counters to throw a little democracy at 'em!

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'Day After' no bomb

Larry Sparks' editorial (*Daily Nebraskan*, Nov. 22) criticizes ABC's production of "The Day After" because "it doesn't take a television movie for us to know that a nuclear war would be horrible."

I'm not entirely sure this is true, for just as our memory of the paths to past holocausts seems menacingly brief, so does our current "will to disbelieve" nullify any attempt to confront the horror of death in a nuclear exchange. Mankind has had, mercifully, little experience with such a possibility. In this respect, ABC has done us a great service if only to remind us of one of many possible futures.

To accuse the production of being one-sided is ludicrous. "The Day After" was a scenario with little ambition to sway its audience toward the "high frontier," "peace through strength" or a "nuclear freeze." Its purpose was to shock us out of our dangerous reverie long enough to confront the nuclear question seriously for the first time in a long time. From the multitude of posters and the muted discussion that filled our hallways last week, I would say it was successful.

Michael Kaspari
graduate student
life sciences

When remembering happy makes you sad . . .

He was almost 20, happy and excited, but felt alone. It was like watching an old movie on television that was truly wonderful and wanting so badly to have someone watch it with you but there is no one, because it is late and they've all gone to bed. That is a happy lonely. The movie is good. That's how he felt now. Happy lonely.



Bill Allen

Or being half asleep late at night listening to the radio, and being fully awakened when a favorite song you haven't heard for a long time comes on. That's a happy lonely, too, because the song brings back happy memories. But that can turn into a sad lonely when you realize the happy times are just memories. That's not so bad if you're not alone, and especially if you have someone, because then you can make new memories. It's awful to hear old songs if you're alone.

He'd read somewhere that the holidays were the time of most suicides. It's getting closer to Christmas, he thought. Suicide is a leading cause of death among teenagers, he'd read somewhere, though he couldn't remember the exact figures.

He laughed too much at lunch, they all noticed. He was usually a lot quieter, but not really a quiet person. He wasn't really that different from usual, though. He had a hamburger, she noticed. Of course,

he always had a hamburger.

She remembered one week he was going to go on a diet and had decided not to eat hamburgers or french fries. He wasn't that much overweight, she thought. But he seemed bothered by it, so she encouraged him. She had a hamburger that day, though. She never ate fries. By Wednesday he had a hamburger, but didn't have any fries. He had both again by Friday. He laughed it off. He didn't seem as down on himself as he had on Monday, either. She laughed with him. That was a long time ago, though.

He read somewhere that before committing suicide people would often seek attention, seek encouragement, seek words. He never went for that kind of thing. Words took the place of too many things.

He looked forward to going home for Christmas. There would be a tree and he hadn't seen his little brother and sister for a long time. As soon as finals were over he would go home. He would be able to leave the Tuesday of finals week. Chemistry was his last one.

He'd bought his mom a 35mm camera. She wanted to learn how to use one and he would help her. She would pretend to be mad that he spent so much money. He tried not to think about the way his father would be. It would be OK the first week. The first week was like a honeymoon in the movies. After that he would just lay low. It would be OK to act like that if it got him through Christmas. Then he would be back at school.

Jumping off bridges into oncoming traffic seemed a 'romantic' way, he thought. Besides, he didn't have

a gun. How could anyone cut their wrists? He'd read somewhere that people who cut their wrists really didn't want to die. They just wanted attention. It was stupid to think of those things.

He sat in his chair and looked out the window and thought of the wrong side of life. The side he had already lived. It's a dangerous thing to think of when you're alone. Especially when the other side is so much longer when you're 19.

Damn, he thought, damn when you can't even be happy without it making you sad in the long run. That must be the most hopeless part, he thought. You can't even remember the happy times without being sad because they're gone. Are all the happy times going to be that way?

It was stupid, they said. He'd never said anything. Not to anyone. Sure, but he was always quiet, though not really a quiet person. And lately he had seemed happier. Relieved almost. He was looking forward to Christmas. Why this close to Christmas?

His mother cried and wouldn't go back in because of the blood on the carpet and the soft chair. His brother was quiet and inside was hating everyone at once and even himself for thinking about the basketball team at a time like this. His father cried.

He'd read somewhere that the holidays were the time of most suicides. Suicide was a leading cause of death among teenagers, he'd read somewhere, though he couldn't remember the exact figures.

I'll never be able to eat a hamburger again without thinking about him, she thought, smiling through her tears.

They all let it ruin their Christmas, thinking about it.