

# Editorial

## Life-for-a-life attitude wrong

The state of Florida murdered Robert Sullivan last week.

Oh, they went through the legalities. An investigation, an arrest, a prosecution, a defense and a conviction by a jury.

But when you strip away the legalities and put the act in its perspective the net result is clear: the state of Florida took the life of a human being.

What's the justification of capital punishment? Proponents of this form of punishment are fond of saying "That guy will never kill anybody again."

Well, that's quite true. No one can argue with that logic. But that doesn't stop someone else from going out on the streets and doing the same thing.

Which brings us to one of the greatest fallacies in the argument in favor of capital punishment: The death penalty acts as a deterrent to potential murderers. This argument is, in a word, nonsense.

A study made by criminologist Thorston Sellin of the homicide rates in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana gives vivid proof of this.

Michigan has not had the death penalty since 1846 but both Ohio and Indiana have seen fit to employ it as a population control device.

Sellin's study shows that the homicide rates of the three states were about the same from 1920 to 1964. In the 10 years after that the rate in Michigan showed a dramatic rise over those in Ohio and Indiana.

Ah, you say, that proves it's a deterrent because Michigan, with no death penalty, had a higher homicide rate than the states that did employ the death penalty.

But this isn't really the case since both Indiana and Ohio had almost stopped executions from 1960 to 1974. (There were a total of eight executions in both states in those years.)

The fact is most murders are committed on the spur of the moment. Killers don't stop and think about the act they're about to commit anymore than jaywalkers do.

The ironic fact about this is that, for the murderer who does stop to think out his crime, the chances are excellent that he won't be caught.

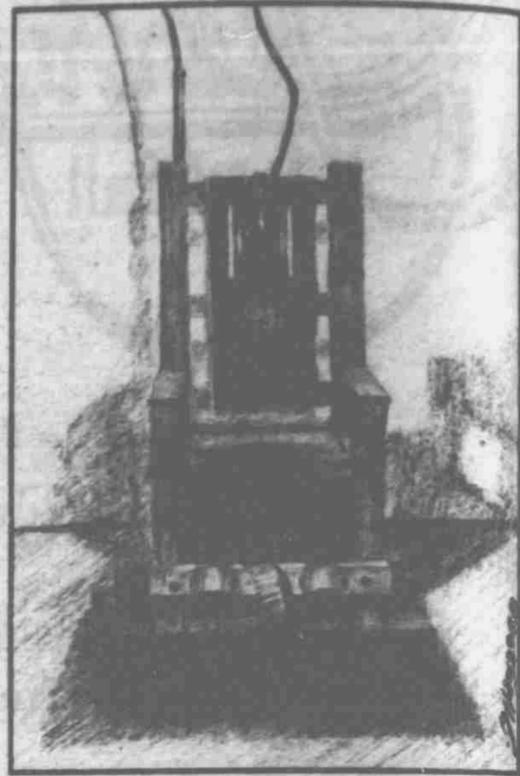
The legion of unsolved murders committed by organized crime are testimony to this.

But the most important question dealing with the death penalty is the moral question. People have wrestled with this question for many years but have been unable to come up with an answer.

But ask yourself this: How can a society teach its children that taking a human life is wrong and then turn around and do the exact opposite of what it preaches to its children?

The hypocrisy of this attitude touches everyone in society and must be dealt with before we can become a truly democratic society.

— Jeff Goodwin



## Security in both consistency, change

Two basic human needs are the needs for security and for a meaning in life. Unfortunately, these needs are often in conflict though this need not always be the case.

In the area of personality, the need for security manifests itself in the seemingly dull and unimaginative person who merely continues his daily routine

ests itself in conservatism. The tendency here is the same as with personality — "let us stick with what we have and what is assured." The basic motivation also is the same — fear of the void.

In politics, the need for a meaning in life manifests itself in the activities of those groups which try to create a better political system.

In both personality and politics, true harmony and contentment can only be achieved if both the need for security and the need for a meaning in life are taken into account.

As individuals, this means we need to pursue both consistency and change in our lives. Erratic, haphazard change can often be meaningless because it lacks direction. Change should thus be grounded in a consistency of purpose.

Conversely, what we short-sightedly perceive as security may only be a temporary security. True security thus necessitates a willingness to discover alternatives and to change.

Similarly, in politics, we need to appreciate the value of what exists and to build upon that in order to create both a more meaningful and more secure society. This also involves having a long-range vision of what security really is and the factors that contribute to it.

In both personality and politics, therefore, any radical attempt for meaningful change must be grounded in the conservative desire for security. Similarly, those of us who value security above all should see how change can result in both a different type and a higher level of security in our personal and political lives.



**Krishna Madan**

year after year. The need for a meaning in life manifests itself in the person who seeks mental, emotional or spiritual stimulation through a process of discovery.

Much of humanity falls into the former category. In order to understand this, we need to truly appreciate the consequences of what it is like to be without security.

Picture yourself ill. You probably have a loved one to take care of you. Now picture the same scenario in an unfamiliar city in which you know no one. Further still, picture yourself without any money. Imagine yourself sick and living on the streets.

This is a picture of the void. The starkness of this void is what prompts most of us to accept the security of consistency or regularity in our lives and to forego thoughts of change or excitement.

In the area of politics, the need for security man-



## Letters

### Halls need polling booths

If you were to walk into the office of the Residence Hall Association in Neihardt Residence Center you would find, of all things, a war bulletin posted on the wall. It seems that RHA has facetiously declared war on the "Empire of ASUN" because of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska's decision to remove its polling places for next year's elections from the residence halls.

It's all in good humor, sure, but behind it all lies the strong sentiment that ASUN no longer desires to serve the needs of university residence hall residents. The closing of a few polling places may seem a trivial thing, but for the 4,676 city campus students who will now have to vote in the Nebraska Union rather than their own food service it's not a laughing matter. What makes it worse is ASUN took its action without any discussion with the concerned hall governments of RHA.

The last time ASUN affirmatively took a stand on any residence hall issue was during the elections earlier this year. And even then it was the ACTION Party, not the ASUN Senate, that spoke out on the Harper-Schramm-Smith railroad crossing problem.

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### Fundamentalist leaders cry, 'Let my people go'

## Anti-certification battle worthwhile

It should be clear by now that Louisville's Faith Christian School situation is serious, and that hundreds and thousands of people find Nebraska laws on teacher certification to be a violation of what they think is deeply important.

"The conflict is going to grow hour by hour and day by day until we end this,"



**Eric Peterson**

the Rev. Clay Nuttall of Fruitport, Mich., told The Lincoln Star. "They can beat on us if they want, but they can't come in." Nuttall is one of the leaders of the Louisville fundamentalists since pastor Everett Sileven left town to avoid arrest.

Seven men, parents of children attending the uncertified school, have been jailed for refusing to testify about the school situation; their wives, who also were issued warrants of arrest, left Louisville and probably Nebraska

to escape arrest. Sileven himself was jailed for four months after he persisted in keeping his school open, which is housed in the Faith Baptist Church.

What church leaders and families object to is a state law that requires all primary and secondary school teachers to be certified by the state, a qualification which basically means attending college for several years. Sileven, however, has insisted that any state requirements of this kind are an unjustified state intrusion into the educational choices parents make. He goes further to say that school activities at the Faith Christian School are an extension of his church work.

Supporters of the school have shown themselves to be willing to go to jail for their beliefs — and have otherwise engaged in civil disobedient tactics, including a sit-in by nearly a hundred ministers who were forcibly removed from the church-school by Cass County deputies.

The fundamentalists have picketed the Cass County Jail and the State Capitol, contacted the White House,

and used phone campaigns to reach state senators, the state education director, and the judge (named Ronald Reagan, incidentally) who sent seven of them to jail.

Some of the legislators called the phone calls harassment, and the phone campaign has since been stopped, but in all their actions so far, fundamentalists have been non-violently obstructive in a manner which very much belongs in legitimate and vehement political protest. Faith Christian School leaders quote Moses to say, "Let my people go," and link their own effort to a tradition of civil disobedience of great importance in Biblical days.

The windows of the Faith Christian Church and of Sileven's home has been shot out; someone fired their shotgun through the rear window of a car owned by one of the men in jail. So far there have been no further occurrences of anti-fundamentalist violence, but state leaders have refused even to meet with school supporters about the situation.

"They don't seem to be interested in

these fundamentalist Christians," said the Rev. Greg Dixon of Illinois, another school leader in Sileven's absence told The Star. "Since we have no cooperation from the authorities and since they have laughed at us and mocked us, we've had to organize our own security force of ministers."

Indeed, most actions in the Louisville campaign have come in reaction to a government unwilling to budge at all in its ironclad and rather meaningless standard. (No other than Nebraska requires certification, and other states have had similar laws ruled unconstitutional.) "No one has harassed these people," Gov. Bob Kerrey responded to their request for protection, and state education commissioner Joe Lutjeharms has refused to even place a compromise proposal from state sen. Tom Vickers of Farnam on the State Education agenda.

For the past year, the state of Nebraska and Cass County have proved very willing to repress a minority for reasons of expediency, but they are not finding this fundamentalist minority easy to silence.