

# Editorial

## Ambiguity, dullness mark ASUN hopefuls

A debate Thursday featured vague rhetoric, flighty language, and unkeepable promises.

It wasn't the Democratic candidates for president, but a group of UNL students mimicking them.

Three panelists, including me, asked the six presidential hopefuls questions — admittedly vague ones because each candidate was allowed two minutes to respond. I did consider asking all the candidates if they, like the Don Ho party, would shoot a pineapple if no one voted for them. I never did find out.

When the questions were vague, the candidates had no problem responding in kind. When the audience later asked specific questions, the hedging began. Each group has plans they intend to carry out through some mysterious might of ASUN.

What follows is my impression of each candidate.

Kevin Goldstein, US presidential candidate, promises increased student involvement with ASUN through im-

proved lines of communication with the UNL campus. A bi-weekly update sheet, he said, would make ASUN more visible to students.

Unfortunately, as is apparent by the infinitesimal voter turnout, very few people care about ASUN. I don't think anyone would read a bi-weekly report.

I did, however, agree with his assessment of ASUN working best as a service organization rather than a political one. ASUN can accomplish things like student legal services and a typing center.

Ideally ASUN should have a vote on the Board of Regents. The school is for our benefit, we should have some power. Que sera sera.

Goldstein will make a wonderful politician. He talks fast and uses lots of catch phrases. If I was giving odds, I'd take Goldstein 3 to 5. Political savvy is the watchword here.

Mark Scudder, of the Aim party, doesn't have the polished rhetoric it takes to win. A member of the audience asked if he was the actor who

played Niedermeyer in *Animal House*. Niedermeyer was the overzealous ROTC frat boy. It's a stigma that may kill him politically.

Unite presidential candidate Mike Geiger also had considerable control of political mumbo-jumbo, but still took a back seat to the spunky, seasoned Goldstein. He will have to come up with something outstanding — something to catch the interest of the voters — if he is to win. He seemed to emphasize the policies of the current ASUN administration. ASUN's work over the last year is nothing to criticize. Legal services are now in sight and we have the library on football Saturdays, but come election time, who will remember?

Tim Burke, Fashin presidential candidate, said his party wants to do what the students want them to do. He didn't say much else. The Daily Nebraskan reporter covering the debate summed it up when she said the students would probably like Fashin to disband. Voters simply don't care very

much what ASUN does. Hence, Fashin will probably fall by the wayside. Burke did have a nice suit.

To summarize my impression of this year's "serious" candidates: Dull.

Dull also is descriptive of this year's joke parties.

The Don Ho party came out with some good material. The plan to put the UNL campus in a bubble and the idea of honoring Don Ho brought a smile to one's lips. But presidential hopeful John Manchester wasn't strong in spontaneous humor. Still, Don Ho is my personal favorite.

The Roo party has been hurting for comic material from the word go. John Hazuka, presidential candidate dressed in raggedy new-wave garb, looked as if he might produce a few good laughs. Instead he elicited several uncomfortable silences.

Again, ASUN elections are popularity contests. Again, we have a limited selection.

Again, I'm not going to vote.

Chris Welsch

## Salvadorans rewarded for human rights with baseball and burgers

The United States has been criticized, and justifiably so, for the human rights abuses of the government in El Salvador. How, opponents of American policy there ask, can a staunch supporter of freedom and equality support a government that condemns the majority of its population to peasantry? And how can this North American pillar of peace give weapons to a ruling class that murders any of its subjects who question its right to own their land and labor?



### Christopher Burbach

The contradictions inherent in the United States' Central American policy seem to have finally wriggled their way into what some may call the narrow minds of Reagan administration officials.

Those venerable statesmen have devised a program which is destined to negate contradictions and quiet critics by erasing human rights' abuses in El Salvador. And we won't even have to talk to those nasty gorillas.

The program is brilliant. El Salvador will, in no time, be a peaceful bastion of liberty and equality. The country will be to the Southern Hemisphere what the United States is to the North.

No, it's not land reform, or free elections, or serious negotiations; anything like that would be construed as concessions to those usurping Marxist peasant thugs. Nor does the program decrease the flow of American munitions to El Salvador. It even allows the United States to retain a firm grasp on the destiny of our little neighbor to the south.

The program, in effect even now, instructs Salvadoran army recruits in the ways of civilized people. Even as they are trained to do battle for their masters, those noble young men learn to respect human rights. One might well think of them as knights, men of swords and letters. "Always save a damsel in distress," they are told, and, "Give your prisoners plenty of bread and water."

As soon as the young males from inner cities and poor rural areas are knighted, they are taught the "spirit of the bayonet." Once entrenched as martial apprentice, the boys are taught to read French and English. Then they ponder the works of Paine, Voltaire and Dale Carnegie.

They learn to kill only people who are not on their side. They boycott Soviet wares, donate blood and exert peer pressure on those naughty members of right-wing death squads. "If somebody asks you if you wanta shoot a nun, just say no. It's easy."

Each month, a different soldier is named "Human Righter of the Month." The award includes a paid round-trip to McDonalds restaurant in Houston, Texas, a musical score to the Pledge of Allegiance and a season ticket to Chicago White Sox games.

One can only stand mouth agape and wonder at the ingenuity of American foreign policy makers, wherever they are. They have, once and for all, proven their dedication to human rights and their disgust for those who violate civil and moral codes. Most astounding, however, is the fact that all this has been accomplished without compromising American interests, whatever those are.



## Fetal pain and earlier viability help muddle abortion dilemma

For over a decade now, I've seen the abortion controversy keep political opponents frozen at their poles of opinion. Neither side has been eager to publicly discuss the full moral dilemma of an unwanted pregnancy.

The anti-abortion people have downplayed the crisis experienced by a woman who is pregnant when she doesn't want to be. It is easier to describe her plight as a temporary inconvenience. The pro-abortion people have avoided discussing the fetus. It is easier to talk about the termination of pregnancy.



### Ellen Goodman

A few weeks ago, I fell into that trap when I dismissed the president's statement that an aborted fetus feels pain. His phrase was far too sweeping. In the early stages of development, a fetus has the automatic response of a plant or an amoeba. But my response was far too casual. At some mid-point in pregnancy, a fetus undoubtedly experiences what anyone would fairly describe as pain.

The argument about "pain" is not an unimportant one because it takes place at the center of the abortion dilemma. Today, the combat zone for our moral ambivalence is that period smack in the middle of pregnancy when pain and, increasingly, survival becomes possible.

Just eleven years ago, when the Supreme Court

legalized abortion, the justices said the state had a legal interest in the fetus only when it was "viable" — when it could survive outside the womb with or without artificial aid. They set that date at 28 weeks.

Even then, "viability" was less a moral term than a technological one. But technology changed, gradually and crucially. In 1973, only half those born at 28 weeks survived. Today the odds are much longer. It is even possible for a fetus born at 22 weeks to survive.

The morally critical fact is that we can save the life of a baby who can be legally aborted.

This collision occurs very rarely. In 1980, only 10 percent of the 1.6 million women choosing abortion were more than 21 weeks pregnant. Many hospitals have pushed back the cutoff date to 20 weeks.

The number of live births resulting from late abortions is minuscule. Yet they loom large in our ethical structure, and they should. As Dr. Thomas Murray at the Hastings Center for life ethics says, "We knew years ago that when people realized that we can save the lives of babies who can be legally aborted, it was all going to hit the fan. We have to preserve our sense that we are not doing things too morally contradictory."

That preservation is already evident. Far fewer women have late abortions today than in 1973. The conundrum is that these late abortions are primarily performed on teen-agers who find it hardest to cope with the reality of pregnancy or, surely, motherhood. They are also chosen by women carrying deformed fetuses because most genetic testing must still be done in the second trimester.

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