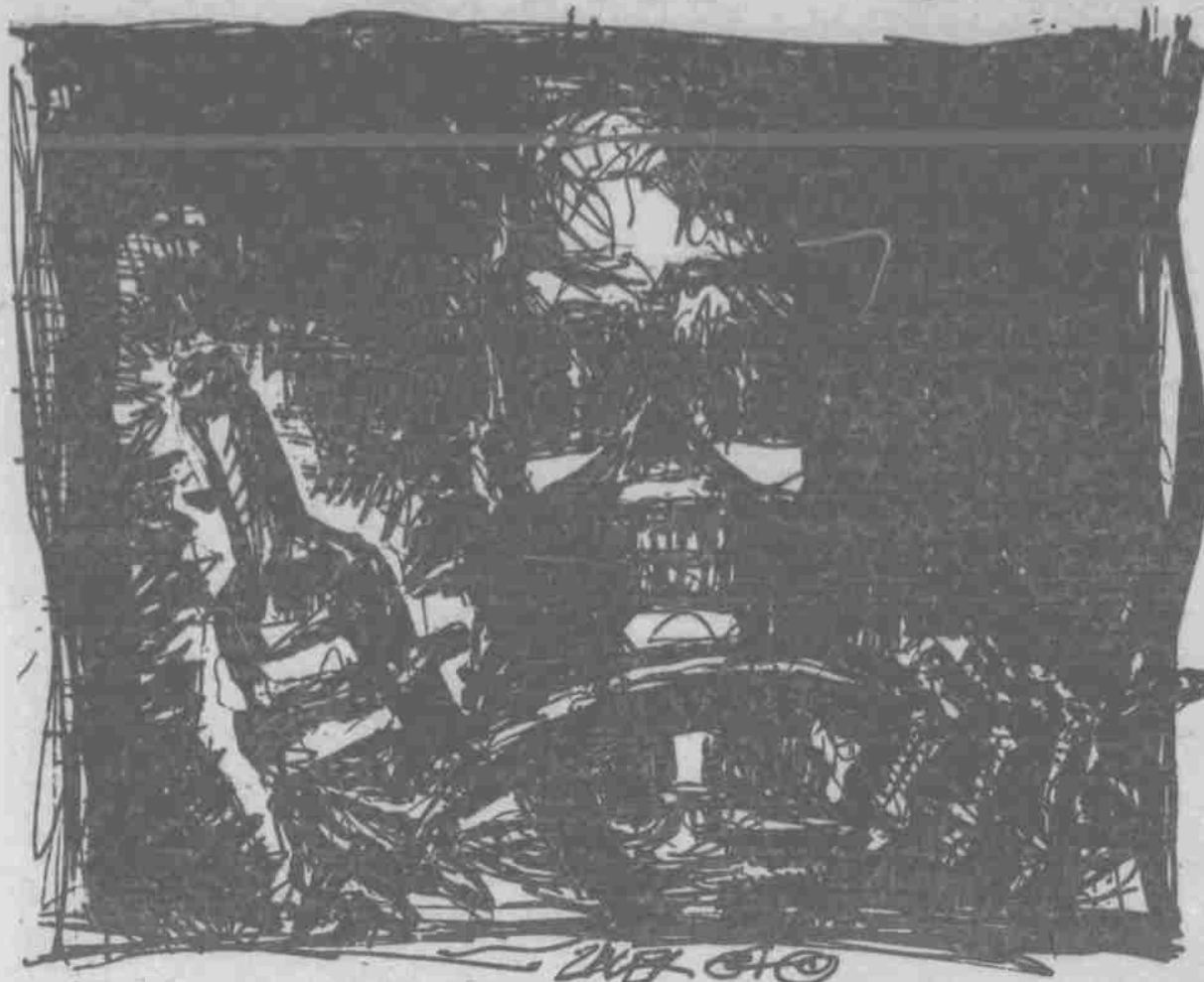


Editorial

Protests against drinking age unjust



Who has the right to tell other people what they can or cannot do?

Certainly not the federal government. At least that's what some people are saying to protest the federal minimum drinking age bill passed Tuesday in the Senate. The bill would require states to set the age for purchasing alcohol at 21 years.

The bill, which President Reagan has indicated he will sign into law, gives the federal government a way to enforce this legal age: If states do not comply by 1987, they will lose 5 percent of their federal highway funds. In 1988, they will lose 10 percent of those funds.

Opponents cry states' rights. Sen. Gordon Humphrey, R-N.H., said the bill takes "a lot of gall and brass" because it usurps state powers, according to The Associated Press.

An editorial in the Lincoln Star agreed with Humphrey's view, and continued, "everyone has his own good ideas about what is best for the rest of

us."

That attitude is where the gall and brass lies, not in the government's attempt to save lives.

The federal drinking age is an attempt to solve the problem of "blood borders." Nebraska has a blood border with Iowa: one state has a higher drinking age than the other, and young people cross the border to drink. Then they have to get back home again. Drunk.

More than 100 Nebraskans were killed in 1983 in alcohol-related accidents. At least half of all accidents nationwide are alcohol-related. About 5,000 Americans died in alcohol-related accidents, in 1980 and about 130,000 teens were injured because of drunken drivers.

A federal drinking age may not prevent all alcohol-related deaths. But it is a step in the right direction.

To those who cry states' rights: Who has the right to kill an innocent person just because someone else felt like getting sloshed and driving?

Television spots raise campaign expenses

Television dominates American life. It sells, nags, entertains, and occasionally even informs. It has also come to dominate the system we use to select a president.

Candidates no longer feel the need to speak to a crowd about their views. They speak to the cameras instead, knowing that the cameras afford them a

much wider audience than they would ever hope to draw in person.

in bringing about the downfall of Joe McCarthy by exposing him during the U.S. Army-McCarthy hearings. Later the networks helped bring the truth home to the American public by bringing the Water-gate hearings into our living rooms.

convinced if they were shown that such a change could improve their public image.

But, if free air time has to come through legislation, it should be done. There's no way such legislation could be construed as an attack on First Amendment rights. It would merely be an attempt to apply common sense to a serious problem.

It won't solve the problem completely, but it is a beginning.

Jeff Goodwin

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Events are created for the media: Gary Hart goes canoeing down a river in Oregon for the cameras. He's not going to find very many voters on the river, but he knows that Joe Blow watching the Six 'o Clock News is going to see that and think, "Hey, that's something you don't see Mondale doing. He's too old for that. This Hart really is a vigorous guy."

So Hart gets Joe's vote not because of his views but because of the way he handles a canoe. That doesn't seem like a particularly good way to choose a president, but there you have it. As H.L. Mencken once said, "Nobody ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American people." And he said that before television came along.

Television has become a power responsible to no one. The television anchormen went on the air and told us Ronald Reagan already has beaten Jimmy Carter. The polls were still open in many western states. Sure, it's the job — even duty — of newsmen to bring us the news, but this wasn't a fast-breaking story. Everyone knew a president was going to be elected that day. A few more hours really wouldn't have mattered. Especially for the Democrats.

Perhaps the worst effect television has had on the electoral process is in financing a campaign. The cost of running a campaign has increased dramatically in the last 20 years, thanks largely to more television emphasis.

Television's influence is felt in state races as well as presidential campaigns. This fall's Senate race between Democrat James J. Exon and Republican Nancy Hoch may cost nearly \$1 million. That would make it the most expensive race in the history of Nebraska. In contrast, the average candidate for a seat in the British Parliament spends about \$6,000.

One reason the British spend so much less is because their election campaigns are much shorter, usually only a few weeks. But candidates don't have to pay for television time on the British Broadcasting Company. There's no reason why the same thing can't be done here.

It's not as if the networks haven't ever been responsive to the public. Television was instrumental



I SUPPOSE YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME YOU WERE OUT OFFERING SOME WOMAN THE VICE PRESIDENCY...

Letter Policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes 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. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names from publication will not be granted.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.