

Editorial

Information restrictions blindfold watchdogs

Rats, foiled again. The U.S. military hasn't only been wasting its money on \$600 hammers, \$200 screws and \$7,500 coffeemakers. It has been giving — yes, for free, no charge — military information to the (gasp) Russians!

At least that's what the Pentagon thinks, and it plans to put a stop to it. According to an article in Sunday's Omaha World-Herald, the Pentagon has begun to restrict information about new technology in weapons testing, evaluation, production and operation and evaluation of defense contractor performance. It was not always classified information — it was available to the public before the sudden change.

The change began a year ago, when Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger complained that the Soviets were having too much information about new U.S. mil-

itary technology spoon-fed to them. Instead of having to resort to sordid and expensive tactics to sniff out U.S. military secrets, the Soviets could find information wherever they looked.

This "saved them millions of dollars in research and development costs and helped them develop countermeasures to U.S. weapons systems," Weinberger said in the article.

Good thing the Pentagon is putting a stop to these freebies, right? Wrong, for two reasons.

First, while the Pentagon's information restrictions may cut off the Soviets' supply, it also puts a blindfold on the groups who are supposed to watch for military goof-ups on defense programs and budgets.

The World-Herald article brought up a good point: If the Pentagon restricts even

non-classified information, how will Congress ever discover the ridiculous expenditures the Pentagon seems to love so dearly? In the article, one officer was quoted as saying some Pentagon officials have begun to refuse even the most routine requests for information. Certainly, if they refuse those kinds of requests, they won't want to disclose to Congress, the General Accounting Office or the Congressional Budget Office such embarrassing items as the reported \$7,500 coffeemakers.

The second reason the Pentagon is wrong for restricting information may be a mere technicality that officials have overlooked. It's called the Freedom of Information Act, passed in July 1967. Its basic premise is that federal government agencies cannot withhold information from the public solely because they think

its release would be contrary to the public interest. Unless the information falls under one of nine exemptions in the act, federal agencies cannot refuse to give Joe Public information from its records.

Some may argue that the information the Pentagon is restricting falls under one of the exemptions because of "national security" reasons. However, the exemption clearly states that information can be refused only if it is properly classified because of potential harm to national security.

The Pentagon seems to have a case of McCarthyism. It is a ridiculous overreaction to the fear of Soviet dominance and military prowess.

Lauri Hopple

Daily Nebraskan Senior Editor



Letters

Reader questions plight of Palestinians

In answer to Abdullah Hamad's letter (Daily Nebraskan, Oct. 19) regarding the plight of the Palestinians, let's look at a few of the other "Whys" he fails to mention.

Why did the Palestinians only turn to the United Nations for answers after losing two wars in 1948 and 1967? Why did they reject the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan that divided the area, giving Israel a much smaller parcel than exists today, preferring war instead? Why did they reject the 1948 U.N. resolution declaring statehood for Israel, instead initiating war the morning after the declaration in which all Arab nations participated?

Why haven't the Palestinian

people been accepted by fellow Arabs by being allowed citizenship, by being supported for education and improving conditions instead of weapons, by using Arab wealth to eliminate refugee camps instead of letting hatred and frustration ferment from generation to generation?

Why are Palestinians, who share an Arab language, religion, culture and history, still refugees in the Arab Middle East after three generations, while World War II European refugees are now Americans?

Look to your own, not Israel, and don't make excuses for killing civilians, especially children.

Barbara Steinfeld
Lincoln

Voters must know weed board plan

The weed board has asked the County Board, both privately and publicly, to answer some questions. The public has a right to know why it is being asked to make this decision. The citizens of Lancaster County shouldn't have to pay for a ballot question that is a result of a personal whim of one or two County Board members, not to mention absorb the cost of abandoned vehicles, supplies and other related materials that result from passage from one department to another. Neither the public nor the weed board know what will happen to the present office and staff. The public language of some County Board members is full of "probably's"; the private language contains a lot of "unlikely's" (as in, unlikely to retain staff and/or program).

On Nov. 7, if this proposition passes, the County Board will assume the authority of the weed board by law. There absolutely is no coherent transition policy in place.

Student rebuts Hoch's campaign claim

Recently I noticed a sign on a bulletin board in my residence hall with Nancy Hoch's name written prominently across it. The sign urged readers to attend a rally for Hoch, who it claimed was the candidate for students.

Nancy Hoch, in the two years she has been a regent for the University of Nebraska has voted to increase student tuition every time this issue has come up. In this period student tuition has gone up 20 percent.

Nancy Hoch also claims she will be an effective voice in the Senate. Again, her record fails to

support this statement. As a regent she voted with the majority constantly, never taking a strong or independent stand on any issue. Her actions support the claim made by Sen. Exon that she would be a rubber stamp for every last policy of the Reagan administration.

Because of these most obvious reasons, I encourage other students to think of these issues before they cast their ballot on Nov. 6. I am proud to say that Jim Exon has my vote.

Wendy Steinke
sophomore



Columnist picks Mondale-Ferraro; he's not Reagan, she's a Catholic

I raised my right hand, swore to tell the truth, signed my name by the little x, and I was in. Thursday morning, I registered to vote for the first time since it became legal for me to do so.

I felt a little guilty, registering for the first time at age 23, but there is a very simple cure for guilt...rationalization. I had some



Chris Burbach

pretty darn good reasons for not voting in the 1980 presidential election and some pretty darn good reasons for casting a ballot this year.

In 1980, I was very busy exercising my new found civil liberty of imbibing alcoholic beverages. At that time, beer after beer was considerably more important to me than who became president. No matter who was in the Oval Office, I could still drink, courteously, responsibly and consistently. My country needed me, and I was there.

Now, however, my affinity for beer has decreased in importance; my country is in greater need of my vote than my belch; although

the way the polls are looking, it'll get plenty of the latter the day after the former.

The polls were another reason I didn't vote in 1980. Jimmy Carter didn't have a chance. "Why vote?" I thought. I really didn't want to participate in an election that sent Ronald Reagan to Washington, even if I was throwing in token resistance to the mandate of Reagan's public.

I figured, that, when my grandchildren asked, "Granpappy, did you vote for that schmuck from California who used to do soap commercials?", I could tell them all about how I got blasted with a fire hose while leading a rally against Big Ron and couldn't get out of jail to vote.

But this year I'm going to vote, even though Walter Mondale doesn't have a prayer, in or out of school. Because even token resistance is resistance, and I want to be able to say I voted against Reagan. It won't make any more difference than voting against winter would — the schmuck from California will get his way and it will snow — but I'll try anyway. Besides, my grandkids are going to be stupid, but I won't be able to fool 'em all of the time.

Yet the biggest reason I didn't

vote in 1980 and I will vote this year is Geraldine Ferraro's candidacy. No, it's not because she's a woman, and it's not because she's a liberal; it's not even because her ticket is the only alternative to the incumbent dyspeptic duo. I'm casting my vote for Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro because Ferraro is a Catholic.

Every Catholic we've ever had for president has been good looking, wealthy, forceful, imaginative, concerned with the plight of common people and fun to watch. Geraldine Ferraro is potentially another in that long line of presidents.

She's not gorgeous, but she's not chopped liver either. She's got quite a bit of money, probably not as much as the last Catholic in the Oval Office had, but enough to classify her as wealthy. She can put her foot down when she has to — she likes to get her own way. She cares about those with lesser means and would try to improve their status.

This year, nothing's going to keep me from voting for Walter Mondale and his Catholic running mate. The beer will have to wait until after the election, when I'll probably drink plenty. And I'll just have to hope that my grandchildren and I will be around to tell tales.