

Editorial

Union magazine ban should be put to vote

Tonight the Union Board will decide whether or not to sell Playboy, Penthouse and Playgirl magazines in the unions. There are good arguments on both sides of the issue.

All three magazines are undeniably exploitive. Many sociologists and feminists maintain that such magazines contribute to undesirable attitudes about women (and in the case of Playgirl, men.) These magazines are successful because they have pictures of and stories about sex and attractive people. That in itself isn't necessarily wrong. There's nothing wrong with erotica. But when people are depicted as sex objects, or if they are depicted as lesser because of their gender — that constitutes discrimination.

Those who would like to ban the magazines from the unions say it would be a symbolic gesture against sexual exploita-

tion. Because the unions are community centers, it follows that they should provide a positive atmosphere for men and women. They believe the magazines are a negative influence.

Those against the ban argue that taking the magazines off the shelves would be a violation of First Amendment rights. Others say it's a moral decision and the board should not make that decision for the student body.

Banning the magazines would not violate any laws. The unions can sell or not sell any magazines it wants to as long as it isn't preventing the publishing of anything. The supporters of the ban are aware that the Union Bookstore would probably continue selling Playboy and Playgirl even if union concessions don't. It's a strictly symbolic gesture, and a well-intentioned one.

But before the board decides whether or not to ban the magazines it should consider the precedent it will be setting if it does ban them.

The concession at the Nebraska Union sells magazines about violent sports. It could easily be argued that those magazines encourage violent behavior — should they be banned? The concession also sells a wide variety of hunting magazines which support violent behavior — should they be banned?

Another argument against the ban involves questions about the origin of the discrimination. The Nebraska Union sells other magazines — Seventeen, Mademoiselle and Glamour — essentially women's magazines, but they promote an "ideal" similar to the one Playboy does. These magazines are designed to help women make themselves attractive to men by

using make up, clothes and exercise. You'll rarely find an article in these pulps on the art of conversation or quantum physics.

Are these magazines a reflection of society's desires or are they promoting an impossible and undesirable image for and of women on their own?

The answer is probably a little of both. The magazines are popular and people strive to achieve those elusive "ideals." Who is to say whether society or the editors are responsible for what that "ideal" happens to be.

Todd Knobel, a board member, has a good idea. The issue should be put on the ASUN ballot next spring, he says. That way, those who the decision effects will be able to make the decision. Until then, the unions should continue selling the magazines.

Career-minded mom strives to overcome child-care amnesia

We are told by the experts that new mothers forget the pain of childbirth almost instantly. The theory is that they are so enamored with the product, they blank out the process. They develop delivery-room amnesia.

Well, I don't know about that. But I do think that working mothers develop another sort of amnesia: child care amnesia. By the time the preschoolers become teen-agers we have forgotten the old anxieties. The panic when a babysitter gave us notice, the stress when we had to research a new place, the unease when we were not quite sure whether this person, this home, this center, was just right.

Ellen Goodman

I had a refresher course in child-care crisis this fall when a friend of mine was, as they say, between babysitters. Being "between babysitters" is a lot like being between jobs. It's an optimistic description of a terrifying condition. You don't really know you are "between" jobs or child care until you find the next one.

What you do know is that suddenly the life of the most carefully-planned family is revealed at its most vulnerable point. Everything — from the mortgage, to the career, to the happiness of the children — hangs by the thin thread of child care.

My friend's stress brought it all back to me. The ads in the paper, the interviews, the visits to nursery schools, the uncertainty, the readjustments — even the time I came home to find that my missing 4-year-old had been allowed by a new sitter to walk to the supermarket alone.

It's easier to talk about it all now. The 4-year-old is 16 and has no memory of the events that worried me. She is not, in any notable way, lopsided. It is her policy, I believe, to refuse to allow me to invent childhood traumas to feed my working-mother guilts.

But I was struck again by how little has changed in the way we deal with child care. Today 45 percent of the mothers with infants and 60 percent of those with kids between 3 and 5 are working outside the home. We have more day-care suppliers and many more day-care needers. Finding care for children is the same frantic,

fractured experience; success still hinges on luck and money.

I know this has an enormous effect on working couples with children. But I suspect that it also colors the lives and minds of young couples, and especially young career-minded women, who do not yet have children.

The old conflict in the career woman's life was between love and work. The current conflict is between children and work. You cannot talk to a woman, age 30 or more, without touching on the fear of or desire for children.

The issue is important to men as well, but not as vital. If you follow the bottom line of most two working-parent marriages — whose salary pays the babysitter? Who chooses the day care center?

So these young women, who have inherited the much lauded "new choices" of our era experience these choices as conflicts. The decision to have or not to have a child is often framed in personal, even psychological terms. Am I ready? Can I cope? But in reality, they hinge on something quite objective: child care. I wonder how different the decision-making process would be if the women knew there was a reliable, high quality, affordable — name the other adjectives — child care?

At the beginning of the women's movement, there was a popular slogan: The personal is political. Issues like those of balancing work and family life were not just private problems, but also public ones. Today we plant every tub on its own bottom. Each family is expected to seek out its own child care solutions — not from a range of enhanced and attractive possibilities, but from limited options and chaos. We do this thwarted by the waiting lists at the best centers, fearful of sex abuse or neglect, skeptical about finding a Mary Poppins, and fiercely protective toward our children's own well-being.

My own child-care anxieties are behind me. My friend's crisis is in remission. The worst is over by the time our children are 5 or 6 years old. It's no wonder that child-care amnesia sets in so quickly. But if we forget, nothing changes. And right behind us is another wave of women on the brink of motherhood whose eyes are wide open.

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Zoning laws restrict free market

Recently, grumblings have been heard from the august citizenry of Lincoln over the selective waiving of some zoning requirements for certain property owners. The specifics of the dispute are relatively unimportant, they simply represent a more public manifestation of the continuing hassles which zoning regulation presents to local government.

Jim Rogers

What is more interesting is the almost universal assent which zoning laws enjoy in the face of rather slim evidence that they are employed in the public interest. In fact, they are almost the foremost example of state intervention on behalf of economic and social elites and a concomitant opposition to the free market system when it does not serve elite interests.

Zoning laws began to receive serious attention on a grand scale only after around 1916. Since that time, a rather amazing consensus of opinion has developed in support of these laws. It is undoubtedly safe to say that except for protection against criminals, few other forms of government regulation receive such universal acclaim.

For example, last year in a property law class of mine, the professor asked the class whether anyone did not agree with the propriety of zoning laws. Out of a class of about 80, only one stu-

dent raised his hands in opposition: Obviously, yours truly.

Usually in such cases I mentally resort to the old adage that truth makes my lone voice a majority of one. Surprisingly, resort to mental apologetics was not necessary in this case. Much to the chagrin of my classmates, the professor, the veritable mouthpiece of the gods in the typical freshman law class, opposed zoning as well. Nonetheless, I would be surprised if the percentage of opposition to zoning ever reaches beyond the scant 2.5 percent it received in that class.

Irrespective of the lack of popular support, there are surprisingly strong arguments in support of the view that the abolition of zoning regulation would advance rather than hinder public welfare. Such arguments have apparently persuaded some rather large cities, most notably Houston and Denver, to not implement zoning laws.

The two most obvious uses of zoning is for the protection of the old, entrenched wealth of a municipality (usually called "preserving the downtown") and for class discrimination (which usually proceeds under the pseudonym of "protecting the character of the neighborhood").

Perhaps in no area of state regulation is there more explicit revelation of the use of government power on the behalf of extant wealth than in zoning. As a community begins to grow and its character begins to change, the wealthy elite usually attempt

to preserve their rather substantial fixed investments in the downtown area by employing zoning laws to oppose market forces. The interest of this class in preserving their status and control from the economic challenge of new and vital entrepreneurs is typically the outer perimeter of the "public's" interest in stringent commercial zoning control.

Residential zoning regulation has a similar utility for keeping "undesirable" elements out of neighborhoods through the use of minimum lot sizes, structural requirements and so forth. By avoiding the subdivision of lots into smaller units, for example, poorer individuals are effectively kept out of the "better" parts of town.

Finally, a word needs to be said about the potential aesthetic damage to a community. The zoning proponent claims that the repeal of the zoning laws would invite destruction of the beauty and social cohesion of a neighborhood. This need not be true.

It need be noted that even with zoning, this type of disruption and dislocation occurs. But under a system of zoning those who bear the brunt of the cost usually are not compensated for their sacrifice for the public good. This is in stark contrast to a market approach to land use. Older conceptions of covenant and nuisance can be reimplemented which protect property interests rather than seek solely to spur economic development.

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