

Editorial

Education chief needs to seek quality, equality

Senate confirmation of William Bennett as the new U.S. Secretary of Education is, in diffusers' terms, a "gimme." Less certain is what Bennett will do once he gets into the Cabinet Club.

He will probably be able to keep his job for four years — something Terrell Bell could never be sure of — as President Reagan has given up on dismantling the Department of Education. However, Bennett is under instruction from the top to study the department and determine its proper organization, size and role.

Bennett moves to the Education Department after three years as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, where he earned a reputation as a champion of the classics. According to the Jan. 16 Chronicle of Higher Education, he emphasized restoring "the basic humanities disciplines to a central role in American education," while at the endowment. However, he ran afoul of some academics when he appeared to discount newer fields, such as women's and ethnic studies, as valid humanities courses.

We applaud the rise of a defender of the humanities to the Secretary of Education post. We particularly need such a leader now, during lean economic times for higher education and amidst a wave of vocationalism. A solid humanities curriculum is essential for college students whose decisions will one day affect other people. History, literature, art and philosophy courses subject us to views which may be contrary to our own, give us a foundation on which to base our view of the world and allow us to see how others view the world.

We do not applaud, however, a snobbish adherence to "classics" to the exclusion of more recent and just as valid subjects. Bennett would do well to accept such fields as women's and ethnic studies as additions to, rather than distractions from traditional humanities curricula.

The secretary-to-be also would do well to rethink his opposition to affirmative action. While at the Endowment for the Humanities, Bennett refused to comply with a federal directive, which requested that he set goals for hiring women and minorities. He told the commission "different or special treatment by this agency on the basis of these characteristics (race and gender) offends our best principles as a nation," according to the Chronicle article.

That argument misses the point of affirmative action, which is that our choice is not between two evils. We must choose either to perpetuate indefinitely an unfair and discriminatory system or to redress the error of that system with short term discrimination. Affirmative action is the lesser of the two evils and, however distasteful, is a means of achieving equality in education.

Equality in education is in turn an essential tenet of equality in society as a whole. Bennett should stand firm for federal aid which would ensure an education to anyone who wants one. And educators and students should press him — and Congress — to do so.

Ideally, everyone could afford education and all schools would be dedicated to quality and equality. But that's not the case. And until it is, the federal government must provide financial assistance and enforce equality — that's William Bennett's new job.



Groups spread hatred, fear Debts, taxes, bankers force families off farms

A few months ago a 49-year-old Nebraska man fired two rounds before his converted AR-15 automatic weapon jammed. The gas mask and steel helmet covering his head weighed heavily as he frantically tried to pull the trigger. He couldn't anymore, but it didn't matter. Two of the 28 screaming bullets that pierced the darkness that night had found their mark. Smashing into his chest and thigh, they dropped him to the ground — killing him instantly.

Arthur Kirk, the Cairo farmer, single-handedly took on a fully equipped and professionally trained SWAT team, as well as numerous sheriff's deputies. Kirk had not paid the debts that he had accrued on his property. The officials were to serve a court order to require Kirk to appear before a judge and list his reasons for not repaying the loans.

Van Kloempken

People born in a city cannot understand what it means to have something taken away that has been in your family for generations. Your parents, and maybe even theirs, worked and died there doing much the same work you do. It takes all your energy and strength. When you're sick, you just don't call the nice temperature-controlled office and tell them you won't be in today. No, you get up and work because if you don't, your crops and livestock might die. And the worst part is that all this effort never really gives you any security. Because your livelihood, whether it comes out of the ground or grows on top, is always at the mercy of uncontrollable forces. You never really know what tomorrow may bring.

But still there's always the tax man. Like the gas man, the electric company and the banker, the tax man stands with his hand out no matter what disease killed your cattle or what hailstorm shredded your corn. They absolutely must be paid.

Pride be damned, you lost that a long time ago anyway. It's brass tacks now. Either they get paid or they take your land, and everything on it. You may walk away with the shirt on your back if you're lucky.

I don't mean to say that all banks are bad, or all gas men, for that matter. I've known bankers who are doing a mighty fine job supporting the farmer. These rare institutions are sympathetic to his plight and do everything they can to help, to the point of going under themselves. Unfortunately, these banks are few and far between and are not getting the recognition they deserve.

But for the farmer waiting for the police to steal his life away, alternatives are scarce. In their fright, people become cornered animals, willing to seize anything that offers the faintest hope of salvation. It is then that groups like the Posse Comitatus, which means "power of the county," can be most harmful. Like jackals attacking a sick animal, these organizations offer sympathy to desperate families, teach them a violent method of fighting back and, most important, offer them a scapegoat. All this is offered in exchange for an adoption of the group's otherwise repulsive methods and beliefs.

The Posse is a nationwide organization of men and women who believe the federal income tax is unconstitutional. Along with this, members believe that the American dollar has been worthless since it left the gold standard. And some of the more extreme factions of the group advocate dissolving the federal government and establishing the county sheriff as supreme authority.

Not all parts of the group that call themselves the Posse believe in the same things, but overall, the group advocates violence as the best means to achieve its goals. According to the Lincoln Journal-Star, one member of the group was quoted as saying that "the only law firm I believe in is Smith and Wesson."

In April 1983 a copy of a letter was sent to selected members of the Nebraska

Legislature, describing the correct procedure for assassinating them.

The literature the Posse Comitatus distributes propagates a jaundiced view of the world, claiming Jews are in control of the media as well as the great financial institutions of this country, and that we must rise up and free ourselves of this tyranny. For evidence, they cite the many "Jewish-sounding" names that roll in the credits of television shows. Blacks also are under fire, but not as vigorously as Jews. It's hard to complain about someone that's in a poorer economic condition than you are.

The Posse Comitatus is closely associated with the American Nazi Party, John Birch Society, Life Science Churches and of course, the mother of them all, the Ku Klux Klan. The organizations belong together in the toilet bowl of humanity, where all useless trash belongs. They offer us nothing but hatred and violence, things that we can do without. Their list of atrocities is long and varied. They thrive on discontent and fear while purporting to be something different. One Posse member was quoted as saying, "We are not a bunch of wild-eyed terrorists but God-fearing, country-loving, America-first patriots." Wow! Casey bar the door, look out, they're gonna save us whether we want to be saved or not.

Evidence suggests that Arthur Kirk was being recruited by the Posse Comitatus at the time of his death. I hope the scum that took advantage of his predicament crawls back under his rock and we never hear from him again. Unfortunately, I don't think this is likely, so I must content myself by pleading with those people who find themselves in Kirk's shoes. Please stay away from these groups. They probably will approach you as they did my family, but don't be embarrassed to run them off. Organize if you must, arm yourselves if you must, but do it on behalf of the American farmer, not for some group of prejudiced parasites that only wants to use you to achieve its own goals.

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Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to

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