

Editorial

ASUN elections mandate 'best of the worst' choice

The Daily Nebraskan will endorse no ASUN parties because none of the parties' stands were acceptable to the editorial board. In fact, only one of the five editorial board members planned to vote in Wednesday's election.

The "best of the worst" is the Change Party. We support Change's plan for a HELP LINE to promote communication between ASUN and students.

We also support Change's plan to make sure information flows from the ASUN executives to administrators rather than vice-versa.

Change's 20/15 proposal, which would elect 20 senators by college and 15 by living unit, could ease the problem of Greek dominance in ASUN. Change also has the best representation of executive candidates. The executive candidates come from all living units. The party also has the only woman executive candidate.

The major drawback of Change is its failure to take a stand supporting the Nebraska State Student Association, a lobbying group that works for state universities. NSSA is important and effective, and it must have the support of ASUN.

The Target Party runs a close second to Change. We applaud Target's proposal for a Communications Task Force to represent minority students, residence hall students and off-campus students. Another strong point for Target is the candidates' willingness to stand behind their views — even if they are wrong.

The main problem with Target, like Change, is its opposition to the NSSA. It would be difficult for Target executives to work with the NSSA after opposing it.

Another problem with Target is its link to current ASUN president Mark Scudder's Aim Party. We fear the Target Party would be an extension of Aim — which tends to side with the university administration.

ASUN representatives should take students' views to administrators, not try to make administrators' views palatable to students.

Look Party was the third choice. We rejected the Look Party because its campaign platform was vague. Party leaders say they would work for more student voice, more student concern and less student apathy. But they never revealed a game plan for doing so.

Campaign violations also were a major concern. Look supporters campaigned door-to-door in residence halls and also displayed posters that were not signed by party executives.

Finally the SCUM Party was rejected because we think ASUN has a purpose and should be taken somewhat seriously.

We admire SCUM candidates for their willingness to state ASUN's problems and present specific solutions — stripping ASUN of funds and having it serve as a "pseudo government." But we think student government is needed at UNL.

The ideal ASUN Party, in our opinion, would support the following items:

- A vote for the ASUN president on the NU Board of Regents. The student regent represents 24,000 students, and those students deserve a vote. If the student regent had a vote, more students would vote in ASUN elections because their votes could actually have an effect on university policy.
- Convey students' views to the regents, rather than making administrators' views acceptable to students.
- Change the format of ASUN, so more residence hall and off-campus students are involved.
- Support the NSSA because ASUN and NSSA must work together to promote higher education in Nebraska.

ASUN is not a joke. UNL students need someone to represent their views because most are too apathetic to do it themselves. With the right candidates and goals, ASUN could do the job. Unfortunately, students who want to improve ASUN will find slim pickings in this year's field of candidates.

Marsh photograph justified

The hue and cry about our front-page photo of Lincoln Sen. Shirley Marsh on March 7 is uncalled for.

Several senators sent us a petition (on page 5) complaining that the photo was unfair because of Marsh's past support of the university and that it presented an incomplete picture of her as a senator.

Marsh sent a letter that ran March 10 claiming she was on medication for a "dental emergency," but wanted to "tough out" the budget hearing because it was important.

We applaud Marsh's dedication and her unyielding support of the university. But if the occasion and circumstances were to arise again, we would run the photo again.

That a given senator supports or doesn't support the university is not a condition on which we base our news coverage. We will not alter the presentation of facts, or photos, because our views or interests coincide or collide with those of a newsworthy person.

To our readers, the university budget hearing of the Appropriations Committee is one of the most important events of the year — they deserve a fair and complete picture of what happens. Unfortunately, a photo can capture only one image, one stopped instant in time. However, we feel the photos, one of NU President Ronald Roskens testifying and one of Marsh asleep, accurately represented the roles of those two people at the hearing. Roskens spoke, and according to the photographer, Joel Sartore, Marsh was asleep for most of the 90 minutes he was at the meeting. Reporter Brad Gifford also said Marsh was asleep during the part of the hearing.

In addition, a Daily Nebraskan photographer had turned in another photo of Marsh sleeping earlier in the session. It pictured Marsh asleep at her desk in the Unicameral. We did not run that photo — at the time, it was not newsworthy.

When Marsh put herself up for election, she became a public person. Her behavior, especially in the Legislature, is legally and ethically open territory for news reporting and editorial comment. Indeed, it is imperative that public officials are under the scrutiny of the press.

Our decision to run the photo was made with these considerations: Marsh was asleep during a great part of the hearing; Another photo had been turned in of Marsh sleeping earlier in the legislative session; and many of Marsh's constituents are UNL students and have a right to know what their elected representative is doing.

Those who argue that the use of the photo was childish or an incomplete picture would have us present only the positive side of Marsh's performance as a senator. That's simply not our job. We are not press agents for the Legislature or any other governmental body, including the university. We are an independent student newspaper.

BEN SARGENT
Drawing for the American People



School consolidation threatens rural one-room schoolhouses

With the school consolidation bill coming up for second-round approval by the Unicameral, I suppose that it is really too late to hope that the clumsy meddlers (truly known only obliquely by the term "legislators") supporting the bill would learn the lesson of simple self-restraint: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

students is the preferred method of urban schooling in this age of assembly-line education, it really should not be a complete surprise to even the most committed urbanite that reasonable people can opt for a more personable form of schooling.

It is almost trite to point out these days that the economy of rural Nebraska is in bad shape. Everyone knows that. What seems rather curious, however, is that many people living in rural areas seem willing to undergo significant monetary diseconomies in order to stay where they are. Only one reason can apparently explain this phenomenon, namely rural life offers a significant psychic income to those who choose such a lifestyle. That is, there exists large non-monetary benefits which outweigh marginal (and sometimes even very significant) monetary losses.

However, if these important non-monetary benefits to rural life disappear, then we probably will witness a quick demise to the family farm as a significant way of life. Yet it is exactly these types of benefits which the school consolidation bill destroys. Passage of the proposal would simply heap insult upon injury: It would turn up the social heat on a group of people already in a financial pressure cooker.

The Nebraska Legislature is elected to serve people, not the great secular idol of efficiency. Rural Nebraskans expect legislators to protect their unique and quickly disappearing way of life. Passing the school consolidation bill would be a treacherous action for those entrusted with the stewardship of Nebraska cultures. To murder the one-room schoolhouse certainly would invite justified electoral retribution. The Unicameral would do well to learn the lesson taught in a 18th-century Gullard poem:

"At the turn of Fortune's wheel,
one is disposed,
another lifted high
to enjoy a brief felicity.
Uneasy sits the king —
let him beware his ruin
for beneath the axle of the wheel
we read the name of Hecuba."



Jim Rogers

The lengths to which the bill's supporters go to obscure the fact that the primary purpose of the legislation is in fact consolidation is almost laughable. The pretense for this year's attempt is tax equity. However, for something ostensibly quite different from the defeated 1981 school consolidation bill, this "tax equity" bill shares a striking similarity to the earlier proposal. In an almost Orwellian fashion, the proposal's backers seem to think that merely changing the title of bad legislation makes that which was unpalatable a scant number of years ago, suddenly appetizing.

The bill's backers have clearly done their homework. They have managed to keep the debate focused upon the discrepancy in the mill levies between districts with small schools and those with larger schools. However, were attention to be paid to the reality of the matter, namely what each household actually pays on the average, in many cases we find that the tax burden is significantly lower in smaller-sized school areas than in the larger-sized school regions.

Ultimately, however, something more important than money is at stake in the resolution of the issue. Namely the preservation of the unique culture found in rural Nebraska that is unquestionably epitomized by the one-room schoolhouse. Although huge brick monoliths crammed with hundreds, if not thousands, of



Letters

State senators question Marsh photo publication

Our reaction was a mixture of surprise and disappointment when we saw the picture of our colleague, state Sen. Shirley Marsh of Lincoln, on the front page of the March 7 Daily Nebraskan. We were surprised that the newspaper at our principal state university, with its fine School of Journalism, would publish such a picture. And, yes, our feelings went beyond surprise; we were a little disappointed.

Like quoting out of context, the picture of Marsh does not give the full picture of her performance as a senator. Marsh is a dedicated, hard-working senator who spends long hours on

the Appropriations Committee and on other legislative tasks, working to improve the state of Nebraska. Your picture strongly implies otherwise.

It seems that besides pious debates on what is or is not good journalism, there is a human side to this story. This, as always, is the most important one. We are all taught, or at least I hope we are taught, that fun should not be had at the expense of another.

I would hope that you will reconsider your publication of this picture in new light, and that, in the future, you consider more deeply the consequences of your actions, and yes, your power.

Sen. Ariene Neilson
Grand Island
Signed by 21 other state senators

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