

Letters

Cather-Pound president criticizes RHA coverage

A campus newspaper should: 1) inform and 2) entertain. Lately, it seems that feature writing has demanded first priority at the Daily Nebraskan. To be more specific, I am referring to the coverage (or rather the lack of coverage) of the recent RHA elections. Listing the recently elected officers in alphabetical order on the last page of the April 12 edition does not constitute proper journalistic coverage of a government election. Furthermore, if the RHA election commission had not paid for the announcement, the officers may not have even been recognized.

It's true that students can be apathetic about student government. It's also true that many of the offices were uncontested. But not giving the RHA and its elections sufficient coverage condones this already highly apathetic attitude. In light of the fact that more than 5,000 students live in residence halls, this newspaper will look more closely at its coverage of the Residence Hall Association in the future.

Brian P. Noonan
president-elect
Cather-Pound government

Editor's note: The Daily Nebraskan ran an article April 8 before the RHA election about the sole party running for executive office. On April 12, we ran an article on page 6 announcing the executive officers and residence hall voters' support of unlimited food service. We didn't run the list of officers for each residence hall.

Professor recommends article on death penalty

I wish to congratulate James A. Fussell for his column against the death penalty that appeared in the April 11 issue of the Daily Nebraskan. It is one of the best-written articles I have come across on the subject. I strongly recommend this article to anybody interested in the subject of death penalty who may have missed reading it.

S.S. Jeswal
professor
physics and astronomy

Reader says freedom, feelings are unrelated

This is in response to Richard Andrews-Koryta's letter, "Reader says minorities entitled to freedom too" (DN, April 16.) Freedom and feelings, at least in this instance, don't have a single thing to do with one another. I'm fairly secure in my own beliefs, and I still get sick when I run into so much as a semi-transvestite. Manara's just the straw that breaks the camel's back.

You're right on one point: If someone is gay, I don't care. It's not got a thing to do with me. My only problem comes when I'm approached, and God help the man.

And, by the way, I don't know of anyone in the ROTC who has AIDS. So it couldn't be argued that military types are potentially more hazard-

ous to the health of the general population.

John Oldson
freshman
history

Reader questions UNL towing policy

Tuesday night my car was towed by the University Police because of unpaid parking tickets. I had to wonder why. It seems to me that a much better and safer way to deal with the problem of unpaid tickets would be to charge a student's university account for the amount due and withhold the student's grades or transcript until this money is paid. But then I thought, Lincolnland Towing sure would lose a lot of business if this policy were implemented.

Maybe there is more to the university's towing policy than meets the eye. Maybe it's something that deserves the attention of the state's attorney general.

Robert J. Stahle
third year law student

Cather would want native prairie grass

In reference to Thomas Sullivan's letter stating his displeasure with the sorry state of Willa Cather Garden (DN, April 17): I agree, something needs to be done to fix the garden. However, I don't think that we should be misled into thinking that covering the area with flowering trees and a carpet of blue grass would be a fitting memorial.

Cather knew what Nebraska was like before it became one big cornfield. It was a prairie state with prairie plants as tough and adaptive as the settlers that Cather wrote about. The prairie grasses and flowers could withstand tremendous drought, buffalo grazing and untimely frost. The plants could even be burned to the ground by huge fires and come back in a few weeks, rejuvenated. The prairie can withstand any calamity except one — the plow. Today in Nebraska only a few remnants of the tall grass prairie that once covered the ground remain.

Willa Cather Garden is in sad shape. Bare ground, dandelions and, even worse for a prairie aficionado, blue grass. But the idea of planting the native buffalo grass was a good one. Maybe the grounds department could get some grasses like big bluestem or side-oats-grama to grow and maybe some wild violets, false indigo or pentstemon. These plants can't be ordered from a nursery like most of the other plants on campus. Planting them would take a real effort, but I think the grounds department can do it.

I don't want to sound like some reactionary nut. The cornfields that have replaced the prairie are necessary (after all, people have to eat) and I enjoy the blooming magnolia, pear and apple trees on campus. But I would like to see some native plants too, so we can appreciate what came before us. I think Cather would have wanted it that way.

Tim Heidorn
graduate student
ecology

THIS IS BOBBY:

BOBBY'S DAD LOVES GUNS. HE LOVES THE SPORT OF SHOOTING. HE LOVES THE TRADITION OF GUNS AND BELIEVES HE HAS A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO OWN AS MANY GUNS AS HE WANTS. BOBBY FOUND ONE OF DADDY'S GUNS. BOBBY WILL NEVER BE IN THE NRA.

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSN. OF AMERICA
LIFE MEMBER

Lawmakers must seek to remedy families' plight

Daniel Patrick Moynihan came back to Harvard last week in search of common ground. The New York senator, the former Harvard professor, delivered three lectures on the American family, or to be more precise, on American families.



It was no coincidence that Moynihan's words came on the 20th anniversary of his famous — or infamous — analysis of the Negro family. In that work he described the shattering relationship between family disintegration and poverty.

This time, Moynihan reappeared as a social policymaker in an era of limits. The problems he described have been engorged by social change. Today, the feminization of poverty, the child-ization of poverty are endemic to the whole society. A national family policy never did evolve. The rate of poverty among the very young in the United States is nearly six times as great as among the very old. In 1983, 23 percent of the pre-school children lived in poverty.

But this neo-Moynihan didn't offer any massive program for change, nor did he support any social-science solution to family troubles. There is no single way for government to turn around the social forces that are affecting families. Instead, Moynihan said, "Social policy must flow from social values and not from social science."

In a flight of academic humility, the professor-cum-politician said, "We do not know the processes of social change well enough, so as to be able confidently to predict them; far less to affect them."

What the senator tried to do then was to cull out of the morass of conflicting values and information, a number of things we can, as a nation, agree upon. "What is necessary," he believes, for solving the deepest problems of poor families, "is the willingness and ability to act in some coherent manner in accordance with some coherent objective." Even in this inhospitable era, "We can act if we can agree ..."

If we can agree for example, that government

should not tax people into poverty then, Moynihan said, we can enlarge tax exemptions so that once again they are large enough to push families out of poverty. If we can agree that certain government programs do work, saving lives and saving money, then we can improve on the model of Head Start or job training for women.

If we can agree that the needs of poor children aren't being met, then we can tie their benefits, like those of the elderly, the disabled, the veterans, to inflation. If we can agree that drugs are destroying families, then we can make a wider commitment to law enforcement.

This piecemeal approach to problems does not quite make a national family policy, and the senator was the first to admit that. He talked in the most general philosophical terms — "We value self-sufficiency. We are offended by poverty" — and in the most specific about money and programs. There was a tentative, pared down quality to his words. No panaceas, no promises, just pieces of progress. No, we do not know everything about making families strong, he inferred, but "... There are places to begin."

What I liked about the speeches was that he sounded less like a politician than like an archaeologist trying to salvage pieces of common ground. In the last two decades Americans have learned what we can't do to eliminate poverty or to empower families, but in the process may have lost the belief that we can do anything at all.

The philosophers in power today maintain that government itself is the problem. But the man who coined the misunderstood phrase "benign neglect" says, "... no government ... can avoid having policies that profoundly influence family relationships."

The current inertia of social policy malignantly neglects the young. Moynihan's disparate approach is not new, or neat, but fits the pragmatism of the times; we have to focus our vision on what we do know and what does work. If we are obsessed by major arguments over "the family," then it's time to find pockets of consensus.

If we can agree, we can act, said the senator. We can help — at least help — the lowest and youngest quarter of our population. The problem is that first we have to agree that we want to act.

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