

Students need to protest 'real' issues

Pretty proud of yourselves, aren't you? "Just like the '60s," the papers said. For the first time in years, UNL students organized en masse to march and protest a social injustice. Refreshing? Nostalgic? No. Mostly, just sad. It was not only the anachronism of short haircuts, stylish backpacks and designer sportswear that made last Monday's march on the Capitol hopelessly contemporary. It was also the cause.



James Sennett

If we wanted '60s style protests, we had plenty of opportunities in recent months. The MX missile, Nicaraguan involvement, proposed federal budget cuts — any one of these or a dozen other controversial issues would have sent the socially-minded '60s students pouring into the streets.

Yet, while these matters raged, ASUN, the UNL student body and everyone else who was so gung-ho over last week's rally sat in the classrooms, hung around the Nebraska Union video

machines and competed in brandname Hacky-Sack tournaments on the Centennial Mall.

So what made the difference? What turned this sea of apathy into a raging tidalwave of political dissent? The only thing that could arouse the sleeping materialistic giant — a threat to its deity, the pocketbook. Nuclear holocaust threatens? Hey, man — I've gotta get to class. Children dying in Ethiopia? Yeah, it's sad; but "A-Team" is on tonight. America's poor getting the shaft again? I know it's not right, but we've got a "Drink and Drown" party to get ready for! They're going to make us pay more to go to school? That does it — paint some signs; call the press; tell the professors to cancel class; we're headed for the Capitol steps!

Yes, Madonna, we are living in a material world. And you have plenty of counterparts right here on the UNL campus — girls and boys alike.

It wasn't just the long hair, raveled jeans and propensity to occupy public buildings that made the '60s so unique. It was, more than anything, the dedication to fight for a cause. It was a cause that oftentimes had little to do with you personally, but affected great numbers of people you didn't know, but cared about a great deal. So men marched for women's rights, women pro-

tested the draft, Northern whites fought for Southern blacks, and everyone cared about someone else.

No, of course it wasn't that idealistic. But it was qualitatively different. We really thought "the Age of Aquarius" was on to something. Maybe it was possible to unite us all in selfless endeavors. But Nixon resigned, Vietnam ended, Jerry Reuben got a haircut and the "Me Generation" rose from the ashes of Berkeley. Now students protesting South African apartheid or collecting for hunger relief funds are just odd enough to make the last five minutes of the Nightly News.

So, in answer to those cries of "Where were the 23,700?" I can only say that they were right where the 300 were when the real issues needed addressing. It was not that 300 cared so much as the fact that 23,700 were consistent. If you are going to be apathetic, do it all the way. If you are going to care, care about more than yourselves.

The transparency of last Monday's protest was pitiful. No, I don't want to pay higher tuition any more than the rest of you. But the fact that this issue alone could arouse our protest in the midst of a world sliding relentlessly into hell gives one pause to weep.

Reagan's act hard to follow

The president is a bit like me. Once he was a movie actor, which meant showing up every day to film scenes that did not necessarily have anything to do with one another. You could shoot the end of the picture first and the beginning last. It did not matter. Later, he went into the business of writing newspaper columns, radio speeches and, of course, politics. He knows even better than I do that what you say one day does not necessarily have to have anything to do with what you said the day before.



Richard Cohen

Maybe this accounts for the disconnected feel of the Reagan administration. The other day, for instance, the president went down to the wire on aid to the Nicaraguan contras. He lobbied on the phone; he lobbied in person. He lost went on television — and talked about the budget.

Lots of issues have been yanked off the White House stage in this manner. Remember Lebanon? It is not even mentioned anymore. It closed out of town. Once, it was worth dying for — literally. Once, it was all that stood between the Soviet Union and San Diego; the importance of Lebanon was beyond dispute. Now it is beyond the horizon.

It's dizzying — all the more so since liberals are supposed to have their heads in the clouds while conservatives have their feet on the ground. It has not worked out that way. Instead, we have government by photo opportunity and enough discontinuity to match a night of television programming. In Ronald Reagan's Washington, one thing often has nothing to do with another. That's because Ronald Reagan's Washington is like Hollywood: Someone keeps yelling "Cut!" Once it was a director. Now it's reality.

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UNL student questions veterinary school plans

After reading my recent letter, (Daily Nebraskan, May 1), I realized that I should have raised specific questions about the proposed vet school.

1) If the federal government is so hard up for money, how can it be expected to subsidize construction of this project?

2) Is there really a demonstrated need in the state for a vet school?

3) Hard economic choices need to be made to maintain the high quality of the University of Nebraska. Can we afford to lower that quality for new programs at this time?

I am not opposed to new programs to upgrade the university. I am opposed to fiscal irresponsibility, corporate welfare and porkbarreling and

this whole project reeks of the latter. The price tag being thrown around only is for start up; the maintenance is going to be the main cost. And what happens if the federal money is not available?

Jonathan E. Davis
graduate student
forestry

Controversial columns force readers to think

Bravo, Bill Allen! As nearly as I can recall, you have just set a personal record. I don't remember this many letters protesting your comments even after your "Greek" columns. But then, theater majors can write.

Letters

I have two comments for your detractors. First, it is my firm opinion that to get people to think, one must sometimes provoke them. By making your "victims" angry, you have also (I hope) forced them to seriously think about their beliefs and why they hold them. This leads to clarity of thought and rational arguments. Your articles may, therefore, end up being beneficial to the theater students and department. Just because I don't agree with what you said (I am a former theater major), it doesn't mean I can't gain from reading and discussing it.

Second, how many of these theater students complained this vociferously when you were lambasting the Greek system?

Kelly Downing
graduate
agricultural engineering

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