

Editorial

Temporary surcharge a necessary evil

In November of last year Deb Chappell, executive director of the Nebraska State Student Association, said "It is simply unrealistic to believe that students and their families can pay much more."

She was referring to relying on higher tuition rates to help fund Nebraska's higher education system.

However, after Saturday's Board of Regents meeting students are going to be asked to pay more.

The Regents approved a 5 percent tuition surcharge for 1985-86 for undergraduate and graduate programs and a 10 percent surcharge for professional programs.

This surcharge is in addition to the 10 percent base tuition increase for the '85-86 school year. The surcharge is not a permanent increase.

Broken down, this means that a resident undergraduate student will pay \$2 more per credit hour with the surcharge than that student would have paid without the surcharge.

It is projected that \$1,936,000 of revenue will be generated by the tuition surcharge: \$1,193,000 from UNL, \$463,000 from UNO, and \$280,000 from UNMC.

No student likes to see an increase in tuition, or anything else they have to pay out, the same way citizens cringe at tax increases. However, we're faced with either an increase in tuition or a decrease in UNL programs and services.

In this light, we support the surcharge as a necessary evil in hard economic times for the university.

Each year the university is asked by the state legislature to make further and further cuts, professors are told that salary increases won't be forthcoming, and we notice a few more buildings that need paint or a few more busted water fountains in need of repair because of lack of money.

A student carrying 12 credit hours will be asked to pay \$24 more per semester than he would have had to pay without the surcharge. When faced with the alternatives, that is not a heavy price to pay.

Hopefully, a few less dollars in our pockets now will mean a better education in the long run.

However, there is one aspect of this issue that we hope the Regents reconsider. The money generated for the surcharge is going into a collected fund for UNL, UNO and UNMC. UNL will obviously, because of size, provide the lion's share of that increased revenue (\$1,193,000 of \$1,936,000), yet the money could be divided equally between all campuses.

UNL students are willing to tighten belts and loosen their purse strings to help the ol' alma mater, but must we also provide a disproportionate amount for the other schools in the NU system? We hope not.

The money from the UNL portion of the surcharge should go only to the UNL budget.

At the same time we would encourage the Board of Regents and NU administration to continue with renewed vigor the search for alternative ways to increase revenue or make cuts without sacrificing needed programs at UNL.

Students will eventually reach a point where they can't pay for their education. Tuition surcharges should be a last ditch effort to keep the system going and not an easy way out for the budget makers.



Nation 'over churched'

Commercialism warps meaning of religion

America is one of the most churched nations in the world. Public opinion polls continue to indicate that on a number of traditional "religious" indices (e.g., church attendance, quality of prayers offered, belief in God and etc.) the United States is the most religious of the Western nations. Only in the Far East and Africa does the popularity of religion reach the heights which it does in this nation.



Jim Rogers

However, in spite of its apparent popularity, there are nagging doubts as to the depth of the veracity of our professed commitment. The same opinion polls which report the popularity of religion in America also report that outside of institutional commitment, the moral and doctrinal elements of the institutions are quite ignored by the "faithful."

Religious commentator Richard Quebedeaux similarly observes in a recent book on the rise of personality cults in American Christianity that "when we examine the 'structure of reality' reli-

gion gives to life in modern America, it is manifestly apparent that much of contemporary religion — especially popular religion — is superficial, only skin deep... (Its 'products' are seen to be almost entirely for me, for my family and friends, and for my kind of people. Its therapeutic approach to self-awareness... produces a de facto self-centeredness that results in an almost total lack of deep fulfilling relationships."

In his now famous Harvard commencement address, Alexander Solzhenitsyn succinctly argued that at root the "similarity of the disease" between the Marxist and free worlds — namely the deprivation of both our cultures' spiritual life — is more frightening than the apparent division between the two ideological camps.

Running through both Quebedeaux's and Solzhenitsyn's critiques of American Christianity, like the proverbial scarlet thread, is the notion that the modern metaphor of commercialism has captured religious institutions and the Christian message to the extent that the authenticity of the message and the religious experience has been seriously compromised.

A survey of the message broadcast over the airwaves seems to confirm this observation. In spite of the apparent aura of godliness which

surrounds the electronic preachers (most notably Schuller and his "Crystal Cathedral"), the provision of products to be consumed and the hedonism this type of provision implies is at the root of these broadcasts. The message of the broadcasters "mentalizes" sin so that mere acquiescence to the message is posited as the primary interest which God has in the transaction. (Witness most clearly Schuller's grotesque "possibility thinking.") The believer is not challenged — after all, negativism does not sell. Hence, the message reeks of secularism and egoism — it is at its core fundamentally apostate.

Though ostensibly serving the Godhead, America's Christianity is by and large an exercise in narcissism. Solzhenitsyn appropriately noted that our age is at a turning point today: "If the world has not approached its end, it has reached a major watershed in history, equal in importance to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It will demand from us a spiritual blaze, we shall have to rise to a new height of vision, to a new level of life where our physical nature will not be cursed as in the Middle Ages, but, even more importantly, our spiritual being will not be trampled upon as in the Modern Era."

'Rambo' rewrites the Vietnam War

"No man, no law, no war can stop... Rambo," says the two-page ad in Variety. That's for sure. The ad goes on to proclaim the new Sylvester Stallone movie a gold mine. In its first six days it took in \$32,548,362 and was being shown in a record 2,074 theaters. Rambo is a monster hit.



Richard Cohen

It is also monstrous. It says, among other things, that the government sold out the soldiers it sent to Vietnam, sold them out again when they came home, knows that American prisoners remain in Vietnam and, what's worse, does not care. The villains come right out of a Ronald Reagan speech: communists and Washington bureaucrats. The former are cruel and evil while the latter are merely cruel and indifferent.

There are two things you can do with a phenomenon such as Rambo. You can call it a mere movie and ignore it or you can call it a cultural phenomenon and wonder what it all means. Since the mere movies Clint Eastwood once made are now touted as the precursors of resurgent conservatism, it is probably wise to look deep in the mournful eyes of Sly Stallone and ask what he's selling that so many seem to be buying. It's more than action; it's reaction — a revisionist history of the Vietnam War, complete with a stab-in-the-back theory.

In the movie, Vietnam was lost on the home front. Politicians and bureaucrats conspired to cripple the war effort as they now conspire to ignore American POWs still supposedly being held by the Vietnamese. If you need a rationale for why the Vietnamese would continue to hold Americans, the movie provides it: They are evil, but not as evil as the Russians who are — as it is said — the focus of all evil. In this movie, though, their focus is distinctly limited. Mostly, they torture Stallone until he manages to free himself. Then, armed with a cross bow with the throw weight of an MX missile, he kills every last one of them.

What's ominous about Rambo is that several million people have already seen the movie and have, presumably, liked it. They probably accept or have no serious argument with the proposition that the Russians and their flunkies, the Vietnamese, are as irrationally evil as communists were once supposed to be. In fact, the Vietnamese themselves are caricatures out of 1960s anti-communist propaganda. They are flunkies of the Russians and their cause is neither anti-colonialism, nationalism or even imperialism but raw evil. Stallone's revisionism makes no allowance for anything we've learned since 1965 — not even the welcome the "Today Show" got in Ho Chi Minh City.

Historical revisionism is sometimes more than mere academic interest. That was the case with Germany after World War I and it may be the case now with us. Just as German reactionaries itched to refight a war they thought had been lost on the home front, some elements here seem to think that Vietnam is worth repeating — if

only to get it right this time.

While that attitude is not entirely the impulse behind the Reagan administration's Nicaragua policy, it is hardly a brake on it. In fact, there is little in "Rambo" with which Reagan would differ. Like Rambo, he finds the same enemies both here and abroad and, like Rambo, he seems to have learned only one lesson from the Vietnam experience: If he's going to fight, he's going to fight to win.

The most dangerous assertion in the current wave of revisionism whose text is Richard Nixon's latest book is that the Vietnam War could have been won — and that transplanted to Nicaragua it could be, if only by our proxies. Nicaragua is not Vietnam but neither is it Grenada. There is no reason to believe the contras could conquer the country and every reason to believe the United States can. But then just like the Russians in Afghanistan, we would have to fight continuously to hold it. We would need a whole new movement in Washington for the names of those killed in Nicaragua.

Life is no movie, but lately the two are often confused. Pictures of Stallone as Rambo grace the cover of magazines such as Soldier of Fortune, which celebrates the movie as the long-awaited response to "Hollywood liberals." Rambo himself seems to sense that times have changed. "Sir, this time can we win?" he asks, and when told "yes" goes off to war with the expression Lassie reserved for little boys. As the ad says, no man no law and no war can stop Rambo. Not even the lessons of history — particularly when they're rewritten.

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EDITOR: Stacie Thomas, 472-1766
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 PRODUCTION MANAGER: Katherine Policky
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 PROFESSIONAL ADVISER: Don Walton, 473-7301

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