

# Editorial

**Daily Nebraskan**  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Vicki Ruhga, Editor, 472, 1766  
Thom Gabrukiewicz, Managing Editor  
Ad Hudler, Editorial Page Editor  
James Rogers, Editorial Associate  
Chris Welsch, Copy Desk Chief

## Anti-antitrust Mergers a losing plan

Prominent economist Willard Mueller recently observed that the United States is in the midst of a "new anti-trust movement." But unlike previous anti-trust movements, today's is an "anti-antitrust movement."

The Reagan administration proposal to increase proof burdens on suits attempting to prevent mergers from occurring shows the truth of Mueller's statement. The plan is the first major change in antitrust laws proposed in the last 35 years.

The goal of the legislation is to increase the competitiveness of U.S. firms vis-a-vis foreign businesses.

But the wisdom of the proposal is suspect. The number of corporate conglomerate mergers, after slackening during the early 1970s, skyrocketed again and has continued unabated.

The trend established during the late '70s has only become more pronounced during the '80s: Since 1980 the number of mergers taking place among U.S. business has almost doubled, and the amount of assets involved in the takeovers has almost quadrupled. This massive trend toward

industrial concentration needs no legislative boost.

Even if the bill was enacted, there is little evidence that the objective — increased international competitiveness — would be aided by the proposal. For example, an exhaustive literature survey published in the *Journal of Finance and Banking* concluded that no economic advantages accrue from conglomerate mergers.

Thus, the wisdom of making massive changes in the structure of U.S. industry is incongruous at best.

U.S. firms' loss of international competitiveness is a question worthy of governmental attention. However the present rate of mergers among the country's largest firms also is a problem — one that has received too little attention from policymakers, the media and the public.

Sacrificing the weighty interest in vigorous antitrust enforcement on the altar of international trade would sacrifice the United States' long-term economic interests for short-run economic gain: a losing proposition for the U.S. public.

## Student regents Appointed board could void rule

The "one man, one vote" rule might kill the chance for a student regent vote on the NU Board of Regents under the present elected system.

But if the nine regents were appointed by the governor, subject to approval by the legislature, the equal representation question could be resolved. The three student regents, elected by their campus constituencies, then could be given the collective vote they are seeking.

Regent Margaret Robinson of Norfolk, who opposed the student regent vote at Friday's Constitutional Revision and Recreation Committee hearing, said the plan is unfair because students would be allowed two votes — one in their home districts and one at NU.

Legally, Robinson is right. But NU students have a vested interest in the board's decisions. They deserve a chance to share in policy-making.

Currently, students act as lobbyists. The regents, who sometimes represent home-town interests more than NU interests, usually have their minds made up on issues before the student regents' presentations.

If reports were appointed the "one-man, one-vote" argument would be void.

Another advantage to an appointed board would be constant quality. Although the current board is informed on issues, problems could arise on future boards. Members could be elected who have little knowledge of universities and higher education. As a result, NU students, faculty and the state would suffer.

Some argue that an appointed board would give the governor too much power. But that power could be checked by having the Legislature approve each choice, much the same way as the Senate approves a president's choice for the U.S. Supreme Court.

## Black poverty

Documentary should help generate solutions

The destruction of the black family and its causes, a taboo subject only 20 years ago, surfaced in a CBS-TV documentary Saturday night.

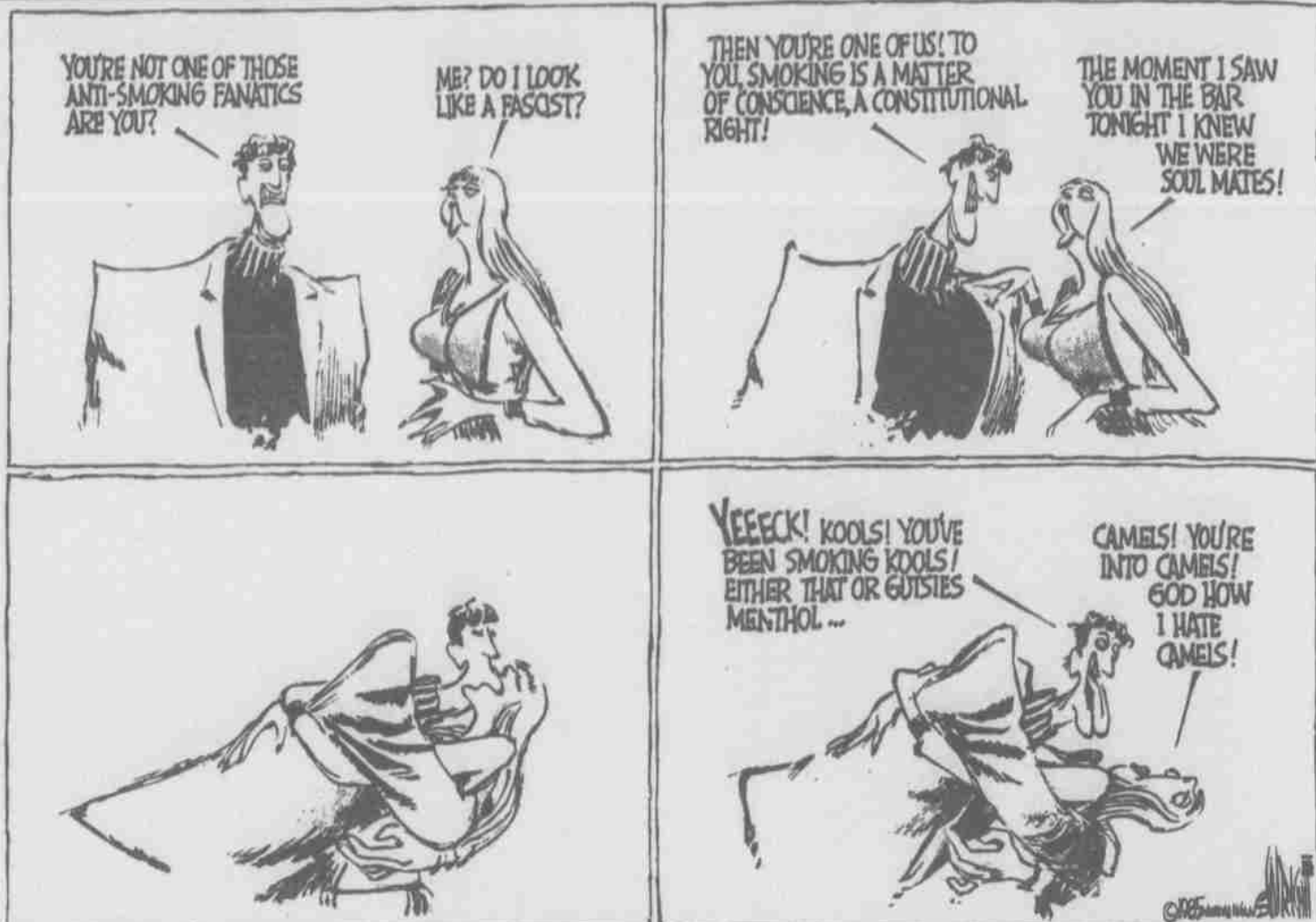
The program, produced and narrated by Bill Moyers, and the discussion among black leaders televised immediately after the documentary, should make people aware of the problem and generate solutions.

The documentary emphasized the growing tragedy of fatherless

black families and the cycle of poverty it engenders in communities.

Although all the participants agreed that welfare as a safety net was needed, liberals and conservatives indicated that the current system of welfare needs to be revised.

The documentary represented the TV medium at its best: presenting the public with human strengths and weaknesses that call for a caring response.



## Bill honors Pearl Harbor vets State senators face record number of bills

Joseph R. Baburek, machinist first class, was getting ready for church at 7:55 a.m. when he heard engines. Up on deck, he saw planes, flying over the Navy repairs ship he lived and worked on. The planes were so low he thought he could touch their sun insignias as they passed over.



Chris Welsch

The men on the boat ran to their stations. Baburek was frightened, but the surprise attack made him "fighting mad." The men on his ship were credited with downing two Japanese planes and sinking a midget sub on Dec. 7, 1941. Now, 45 years later, Baburek is the chairman of the Nebraska Chapter of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. Its motto is: "Remember Pearl Harbor — Keep America alert."

Baburek and others thought commemorative license plates for the organization's 90 members would be a good way to keep the memory alive. He submitted the idea to state Sen. Tim Hall, who with Sen. Bernice Labeledz had the idea drafted into a bill, LB864.

If the bill passes, the department of motor vehicles will issue the members, for a small fee, plates with the words "Pearl Harbor Survivor" above or below the numbers.

LB864 is a four-page, green docu-

ment, one bill among about 842 to be considered by the Legislature during its 60-day session. Senators introduced 519 bills — a record. Three-hundred thirty-two bills were carried over from last session. About 43 of those are designated priority bills. Senators have yet to name their priority bills this session. Each senator can name one, and the speaker can name 25.

Senators debated several plans to limit the number of bills people or committees could introduce, but all the plans were voted down. They could not agree on a way to limit the number, and some senators argued a limit would be too constricting.

LB864 and hundreds of other potential laws have to be considered in the remaining 48 days of the session.

Decisive action must be taken to help Nebraska's faltering farm economy. A number of bills related to the farm crisis, including banking, tax shortfall, budget cuts, also need to be dealt with. Our state budget crunch comes at a time when the federal government has ensured, through Gramm-Rudman, that less money will go to state and local governments.

Some bills won't make it. Undoubtedly, many will be carried over to next year. Some are more important than LB864, some less.

Each bill has to be checked over and written by the bill drafter's office. Each will go through a public hearing; some will never make it out of committee.

The hundreds that do will be sent to general file, debated on the floor, killed or passed, engrossed, redrafted, sent to select file, debated and voted on, killed or passed, sent to final reading, debated and voted on, killed or passed, or sent back to select file, redebated and voted on, killed or passed, then sent to the governor to be signed or vetoed. The grinding, massive machinery of state bureaucracy processes all bills the same way, no matter how simple or complex.

Because of the massive number of bills, the Legislature probably will devote most of its afternoons to public hearings. At the end of February or the beginning of March, full days of floor debate will begin. They'll have about 25 days to pass the tangled mass of legislation.

Baburek's bill just had its public hearing Friday. It is at the beginning of its trip through the Legislature. It's not a controversial bill. A similar bill creating plates for POWs passed with little debate in 1984.

But Baburek is aware that LB864 may not be made law until the next session.

"It may get caught in the backlog," he said. "There shouldn't be any controversy. There's no doubt the governor would sign it."

But, he said, because of the number of bills, things could get "clogged up." Indeed.

Welsch is a UNL senior journalism and English major and a Daily Nebraskan copy desk chief.

## 'The Washington Rule' doesn't always work on the side of public officials

Not long ago, the wife of a public official approached me at a reception and extended her hand. She gave me her name, told me who her husband was and proceeded to tell me that a column of mine had insulted her husband, damaged him, held him up to contempt and ridicule and ruined what, up to then, had been a happy and fulfilling life. With that, she dropped her hand and uncharacteristically pulled punch: She said goodbye. She meant good riddance.



Richard Cohen

The blood rushed to my face. This was a clear violation of The Washington Rule. The rule holds that no one is ever to be held accountable for anything done in the course of business. You can, for instance, attempt to murder a foreign leader by day and make small talk with his ambassador at night.

People who do this are called "sophisticated" or "civilized."

Now it appears that even more people do not understand the rules, and they have left the House Minority Leader, Robert Michel (R-Ill.), reeling with indignation and cultural vertigo. The Very Powerful Michel is, appropriately enough, the owner of two Cadillacs for which he would like a garage built behind his Capitol Hill townhouse. That takes a variance and that, in turn, takes the approval of Michel's Advisory Neighborhood Commission. It turned him down, citing among other things, his voting record on District of Columbia matters.

"Some of the commissioners have been on the phone discussing (Michel's) lack of support for the District," said one of the commissioners. "He did not support the (D.C.) Voting Rights (Amendment) . . . And is not for anything for the District of Columbia." To which Michel responded: "Can you tell me what that possibly has to do with my wanting to build a garage for my own safety? If we did that on the Hill, (the

press) would crucify us."

Let us dispose of one issue real quickly. Michel is right. His voting record on anything, even bills concerning Washington, D.C., should have no bearing on whether he does or does not get a variance. He is either entitled to it or he is not and his record as a public official should have nothing to do with the decision. If the city really wanted to play hardball, after all, it could threaten not to pick up the garbage of congressmen who vote the "wrong" way or, even worse, actually ticket their cars like anyone else's for illegal parking.

But having said that, let us also concede that something wonderful has happened. Here are some people, Washington residents yet, who actually think that the things done here count. They actually believe that what the government does has an impact on the way people live — quality of life, if you'll pardon the expression — and that the people who run the government ought to be accountable in every way for what

See COHEN on 5