

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

Speak out Budget input necessary

The time has come for students at UNL to speak out about the proposed 1986 budget cuts, which were released Sunday by the administration.

UNL's vice chancellors have come up with a list of reductions and eliminations that total \$2.68 million. That figure, along with another \$1.1 million in cuts proposed last spring, brings UNL's total reduction-elimination plan to about \$3.8 million.

The vice chancellors will present the more recent cut proposals to an Ad Hoc Budget Review Advisory Committee Wednesday from 3 to 6 p.m. in the Great Plains Room of the East Union. Students should plan to be there.

Although the vice chancellors already have decided how much of the total university cuts each department will share, the possibility remains that students could have some input on how each department handles those cuts.

For example, the decision already has been made to cut about \$900,000 from the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The ad-hoc committee, which will consider students' comments will review proposals on how the college should deal with that cut and recommend any changes to UNL Chancellor Martin Massengale and the NU Board of Regents. The committee has requested student and faculty input, only in 10-page written form. Few students can or would take the time to respond in such a way.

But there are other possibilities. The Academic Planning Committee will sponsor a student forum for ASUN senators and their constituents, in which

students can voice their opinions about the proposed cuts.

Student and faculty input shouldn't stop there. Professors should take 10 or 15 minutes of a class this week to inform students about the cuts and how they can react to them.

ASUN is planning a pamphlet or questionnaire for students, asking for input on the matter. If such materials are printed, students shouldn't shrug them off as ASUN election-time propaganda. They need to read everything about the budget issue available to them. They need to make a phone call or two to their regents, or take the time to fill out a questionnaire. Student apathy will only make the regents' final decision easier. If students don't appear to oppose the cuts, the board might not think twice when it comes time to cutting programs.

As the budget battle boils, regents should listen to responses from every group — administrators, faculty, taxpayers and students.

True, students don't understand the workings of the UNL system as well as administrators do, but they can provide extra insight about programs and classes that administrators know little about. Students' opinions should be taken seriously by the regents and Massengale. They represent the largest body that will be affected by the cuts.

UNL cannot avoid its \$2.7 million budget cut. It's reality.

But students, faculty and administrators need to work together to find the best possible ways to handle the cuts.

The student voice is essential in this process. Make it a point to be at Wednesday's meeting.

Cheaper oil

Enjoy it while you can — it won't last

Tumbling oil prices could boost the U.S. economy. But consumers should remember the lessons of the 1974 and 1981 oil price hikes.

In the early '70s, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries cartel produced more than 60 percent of the world's oil. The group now claims only about 38 percent.

When the OPEC cartel raised the price of oil from \$2 per barrel to \$34, the United States felt the crunch. Americans traded in gas-guzzling cars for smaller, more fuel-efficient models, added insulation to their homes and switched to less expensive fuels.

Experts say OPEC's latest price drop and increased output is an attempt to recapture its falling share of the market.

If that happens, Americans could be caught in another oil-guzzling trap.

As foreign oil prices drop, U.S. producers in Texas and Oklahoma could suffer. Companies will be less likely to drill and

develop new sources of oil. Employees will lose jobs, companies will lose money and the United States again could find itself at the mercy of OPEC.

On the bright side, plummeting oil prices could help curb inflation, which continued at a pace of 3.8 percent in 1985.

Economists say the price cut also could help consumers — by lowering prices in all oil-related products, such as plastics, transportation and energy.

Perhaps the most important benefit of the oil price cut is its effect on the U.S. trade deficit. Economists say price cuts could cut the deficit and pump \$10 million into the U.S. economy.

U.S. consumers and companies should take advantage of low prices, but be careful not to allow OPEC to regain its power.

By continuing to conserve oil and develop new projects, the United States can enjoy low price benefits without worrying about the consequences.



Readers' Representative

DN's coverage of 'Hail Mary' not perfect, but mostly accurate

The cancellation of the film "Hail Mary" at the Sheldon Art Gallery commanded a lot of attention and press over the last week. Some people think it attracted more of both than the issue warranted. Others think that the attention and coverage it did attract were, as has been alleged of the complaints against the movie, quite distorted.

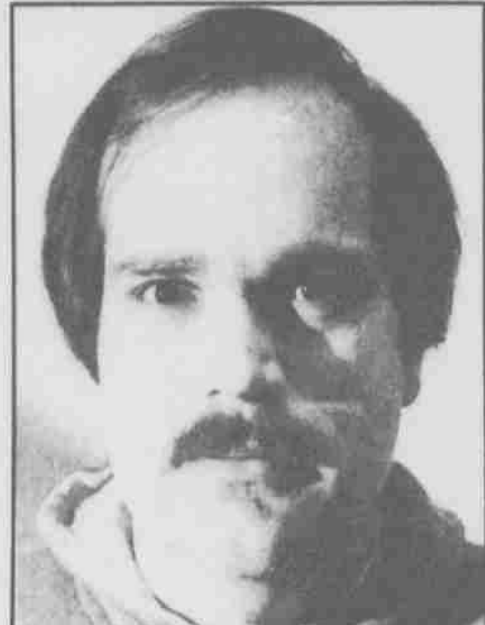
Several people have questioned the Daily Nebraskan's handling of this story. First, why was the film cancellation worthy of so much coverage? Second, why were no officials of the Catholic Church contacted or quoted concerning the official reasons for the condemnation of the film by the body? Third, why did the cancellation of "The Gods Must Be Crazy" at Sheldon last year not produce the same coverage and furor?

The questions are all legitimate, worthy of response. I shall try to address each of them adequately, and in so doing I also hope to clarify some questions concerning the nature of news reporting in general.

First, concerning the coverage of the story. The DN ran three feature articles — two of which were front page leads — a movie review, an editorial and an independent editorial column concerning the matter. In addition, there have been numerous letters to the editor published on the subject. Of the feature articles, the first was a page three story on Monday that simply announced the cancellation. Such an article would be run concerning most newsworthy events on the UNL campus of which the DN is aware.

The first front-page article (Feb. 4) was deemed newsworthy because of responses received at Sheldon, largely as a result of the Feb. 3 DN article. The second was a story about the private showing of "Hail Mary" to the Sheldon Film Theatre Board of Directors — so technically it was a different, though related, news story.

The issue was front-page worthy largely because of the constant denial by Sheldon officials that such a screening was planned. Yet when DN staffers showed up at the place and time specified in their information, the film was indeed shown. At the very best, this scenario is puzzling. A vital function of a free press is to report on matters that bear public interest and yet for some reason are denied public access.



James Sennett

The editorials and letters to the editor are different matters. Selection of issues to be addressed and positions to be taken in DN editorials are the decision of an editorial board, composed of five editorial staff members. Here the editors are expressing the educated opinions of journalists — they are not reporting the news. Reader response is available through the letters to the editor and occasional guest editorials.

The regular editorial columnists are not regulated by DN editors. These journalists are free to address any issue they deem worthy. So no constraint was exercised over the publication of the column that ran Feb. 7 concerning the cancellation of "Hail Mary." (Besides, the column in question presented an

opposing position to that in the official editorial, and thus helped to balance the treatment of the matter greatly.) A similar policy concerns the reviews of artistic events.

Letters to the editor are likewise controlled very little. Only anonymous and blatantly inflammatory letters are excluded from publication. What students want to write about is what the editors want to publish. If there is great reader response on an issue, the editors can only conclude that there is great reader interest.

Concerning the second question: Reporters who were working on the stories did attempt to contact officials of the Catholic church and were unsuccessful. One of the unfortunate but necessary rules of time-constrained journalism is: If you can't get what you want, you have to go with what you've got. This was the case for these reporters. There was no attempt to stereotype or misrepresent the position of the Catholic church.

However, this did lead to one distortion in the coverage. Concerning the reasons why the movie might be offensive to the Catholic church and many other Christians, the article mentioned only the matter of nude scenes of the actress portraying Mary. Yet conversations I had with Catholic church officials, other religious leaders and Christians in general paint a broader picture. The whole idea of a modernization of the Christmas story in a contemporary and vulgar genre is, for many sensitive believers, a matter of sacrilege.

The issue is not simply one of the appropriateness of nudity. It is one of the appropriateness of what appears to be deliberate desecration — in the name of art — of that which a large segment of this population holds to be sacred. Whether one is a Christian, a Buddhist, a Druid, or a card-carrying atheist, the matter of freedom from

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Letters

Hypocrisy, liberalism said alive and well at Daily Nebraskan

I feel compelled to reply to the Feb. 4 Daily Nebraskan. This issue, more than most, exposed the idiocy and hypocrisy of DN views.

The front-page story concerned the cancellation of the showing of "Hail Mary," an obviously tasteless film depiction of the life of Jesus, in the Sheldon Art Gallery Film Theatre. The story was unbiased and straightforward. On page 4, however, one finds a staff editorial blasting the decision as censorship. Yes, liberalism is alive and well in the offices of the DN.

Next to that editorial was a column by Scott Harrah titled "Gays Need Protection of Rights." In it Scott says, "It nauseates me when I hear about people using a warped sense of morality to discriminate against human beings."

Turning back to the front-page, there is a story about a visiting speaker to address the problems associated with gambling. Why are gamblers "curable" whereas gay people are not?

The fact is gambling addiction, homosexuality, as well as alcohol and drug dependence are all psychological

illnesses that can and must be treated for the benefit of the individuals as well as society.

Perhaps it's time to popularly elect DN staff members in order to obtain a broader range of views. After all, UNL students help fund the newspaper, they should have a say as to how the news should be reported. More or less, UNL students want straight news, not slanted views.

James Feyerherm
freshman
political science