

# Editorial

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## Alcohol use NU needs new policy

The recent ASUN campaign once again raised the issue of alcohol on campus.

The emphasis of the Party party's campaign platform was correct: It's time for administrators to accommodate students' demand for alcohol on campus.

Currently, service of alcohol is permitted on campus only with administrative approval. But the object of this policy admittedly is not primarily to serve the university population; rather, it entices greater use of the Nebraska Union's catering capabilities by "mixed" university/non-university groups, said Daryl Swanson, Nebraska Union director.

If a university group wants to use the union — for a department party, for instance — alcohol service typically is limited to wine. If you're a student group, don't ask.

But more hurdles remain. If a group actually gets approval for alcoholic consumption, it must follow a host of strange requirements that make actual service difficult.

For example, the customer must bring the alcohol, but the union must serve it. The union cannot charge for the alcohol, but it can charge for serving it.

Adopting alcohol on campus would require a shift in union philosophy. First, the union food

service policy should focus primarily on serving the university community. There is no reason that all-university meetings should be limited to wine consumption.

Second, the union should be allowed to get a liquor license and set up cash bars for groups. Discretion on who could be served should be largely taken away. All university groups should be allowed alcohol unless there is some reason to believe that abuse of the facilities or law will occur.

Restricting alcohol access to university members while allowing liberal access to the university members while allowing liberal service to mixed functions is patronizing. There is no reason to continue to restrict alcohol.

Although there are several logistical problems with serving alcohol, the union exists primarily to serve the university, and it should serve alcohol.

A large segment of students and staff are older than 21. There is no reason why these people shouldn't be allowed a glass of beer or wine with lunch, supper or after a night meeting.

The time is ripe for change. Students over 21 and the university staff do not need the NU Board of Regents to paper them with silly alcohol restrictions.

## Shuttle aftermath Data needed, details unnecessary

As NASA officials continue to find parts of the Challenger shuttle and crew, attention shifts to the press as it reports progress of the search.

Since the Jan. 28 explosion that killed all seven people aboard, the media has tracked the progress of the search. They have informed the country of what has been found and how it all fits into the picture of trying to find the cause of the disaster.

Similar attention, although not as much, has been given to the astronauts' remains.

As the investigation into the shuttle situation continues, we're likely to discover more about the

explosion itself and the effect it had on the crew, or when they actually died.

But the media, both broadcast and print, should refrain from providing the country with the visual details. Some media accounts of the Challenger tragedy have included questions of whether the bodies had started to decompose or if the seven occupants had been eaten by fish. Such details aren't necessary in piecing together the cause of the tragedy.

Families of the seven astronauts — and the country in general — will remember the explosion, but they are ready to go on.

## Privacy and courtesy Library not the place for sexual activity

Disturbing evidence of sexual activity in Love Library has some students concerned.

Irrespective of other issues such as sexual practices and orientation, the practice should not continue.

First, such behavior is impolite. Constitutional arguments on sexual activity almost always stem from the notion that sexual behavior is one of the most private aspects of human conduct — so private that conformity to a prescribed pattern of sexuality should not be forced upon others.

But when sexual activity is conducted in public areas, others are forcibly exposed to conduct that which they might want to avoid — as is their right. The choice of forum for the activity, and the privacy rights of others, not the activity itself should be emphasized.

NU students should feel free to use Love Library restrooms without fearing disturbance or offense.

Library administrators shall continue to take steps to halt sexual behavior (heterosexual and homosexual) when it intrudes into the public sphere.



## Religion as a social cement Study's claim correct, but truth is function, not form

With the 1984 election dispute over the role of religion in politics well behind the nation, cooler heads are re-examining the issue — and coming to some startling conclusions. One such re-examination is the recently released Brookings Institution study "Religion in American Public Life," by Brookings senior fellow, A. James Reichley.

The Brookings Institution has long been recognized as one of the most prestigious "think-tanks" in the U.S. The impact their studies have had on American public policy far outdistances the Institution's public notoriety (or lack thereof). This study deserves the widest possible circulation.

The surprise is the strength of the study's conclusion regarding the inability of secular thought-systems to provide an intelligible basis for democratic society. Reichley writes: "The fundamental flaw of secular civil humanism as a basis of democratic values is that it fails to meet the test of intellectual credibility."

Arguing as an increasingly large number of Christian thinkers have, the study points out that a humane society cannot reasonably be built upon a non-theistic or an anti-theistic base. Reichley writes that "a combination of the self and society, held in balance as dual sources of ultimate value, cannot plausibly be found in nature without reference to a third value source. Using purely natural criteria, either the self or society must finally be regarded as sovereign."

If either of the latter two points are embraced, the study argues that only inhumanity results.

The lucidity and breadth of the historical and philosophical survey make the study important. The work serves to frame the current debate, and casts down an intellectually credible gauntlet to anti-theists who blither "separation of church and state" as though the phrase ends the discussion.

At bottom, Reichley's argument strikes at the very core of asserted secular civil justifications: Civil secularism doesn't work; socially, secularism is non-instrumental.

At the same time Reichley doesn't ignore the possible excesses of civil religion. He points out that "value systems based in one way or another on religion must be scrutinized to determine how transcendent moral authority or inspiration can be maintained in a democratic society while minimizing the risks of bigotry, fanaticism, irresponsibility, and obscurantism that some tendencies within religion have all too often fostered."



**James Rogers**

While I agree wholeheartedly with the lamentable political tendencies among some of the religious, it is in treating the form of political/religious engagement that the work finds its major weakness.

While arguing that the only credible value systems are necessarily religious and not secular, Reichley insists upon valuing religion upon instrumental grounds. This leads to the advance of some silly statements.

For example, at one point Reichley argues that if Catholicism were to surrender its claim "to be the one true church" American pluralism would be impoverished "because the option of choosing an institution claiming unique spiritual authority" would "no longer be available." Thus, according to Reichley, the value of the Roman claim is not that it is substantively true (although it is not), but rather that it is instrumental: namely that its assertion provides an otherwise unavailable religious option. Substantive truth and instrumental value cannot be so divided.

Works such as Reichley's "enlightenedly" offer churches an assertedly "sweet deal." They recognize and accord the church the important duty of serving as social cement. But the deal, bib-

lically speaking, is not sweet enough. The intrinsic worth of Christianity hardly lies merely in the fact that it is a social cement.

Now, I certainly agree that the truth of Christianity is socially instrumental — Christian societies flourish because God blesses his people. But Christianity is not true because it produces societies that flourish. Instead, because the religion is true, it produces societies that flourish.

Christianity's claim to produce instrumental good rests only upon its prior religious claim to sufficiently encompass the fullness of all that is true. Prior affirmation and belief in that which was delivered "as of first importance" is required. Namely "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" 1 Cor. 15:3. This substantive claim is not distinct from the good it produces. Yet by distinguishing between instrumental good and substantive truth, Reichley implicitly severs this link. And in so doing he severs the ability of religion to produce the type of societies which are good.

This flaw only renders Reichley's argument incomplete, however. The argument can be made, within proper limits, that because the truth always works (socially), that which truly works (socially) must be true. Nonetheless, it is questionable that the latter argument, in spite of Thomistic arguments to the contrary, can persuasively result in the adoption of Christian theism.

All things considered, however, Reichley's study is of the utmost importance and should be thoughtfully studied. This is especially true of non-theists who have unreflectively remained content in their social philosophies and blithely argue that separation of religion and politics results in cultural advantage.

Rogers is an economics graduate student, law student, and DN editorial page editor.

## Senators' alarming letters get bucks

During a recent telephone conversation, a relative said he had received a letter from Sen. Robert Packwood (R-Ore.) and had some questions for me: What sort of guy was Packwood? Did I know that the letter said there was a "conspiracy" to deny him re-election because he was a friend of Israel? What should be done? Easy, I said. Throw the letter in the trash.

There are many reasons to admire Bob Packwood. He is a leading proponent of women's rights. He is a Republican moderate (virtually an oxymoron these days), a champion of civil rights and a wise and conscientious senator.

Few flies stick to Bob Packwood.

But one of them is his willingness to be just another politician who panders to the paranoia of the Jewish commun-



**Richard Cohen**

ity. The "conspiracy" that recently alarmed my relative apparently does not amount to much. Packwood has been able to turn over \$32,000 of his own campaign funds to the Oregon

GOP to help it regain control of the state legislature. It is not immediately clear how this will benefit Israel.

Packwood is certainly not the only politician who knows how to milk the Jewish community. Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) is another. A recent Cranston letter says he is in trouble for, among other things, his steadfast support of Israel. Unlike Packwood, Cranston does not shy from naming the culprit. It's Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who is probably the best fund-raising issue the Democrats have had since the Great Depression.

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