

Editorial

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Lincoln's defoliation Retailer short on foresight

Lincoln voters could find themselves facing an unhappy choice on the Nov. 4 ballot: continue to put up with the lack of on-street parking near the business where one intends to shop, or take out the trees along downtown streets.

That question will be on the ballot if Lincoln retailer O.M. "Jack" Powell gets at least 4,746 signatures on a petition by October. Although he likes trees, he says, downtown businesses need them less than they need on-street parking near their businesses to attract customers.

Few UNL students, if any, are likely to recall what the downtown area was like 10 years ago when the trees were put in. But if the trees are taken out now, the downtown area will seem a less inviting and pleasant place. Lincolnites should decline to sign the petitions or, if the issue makes the ballot, vote the proposal down.

Powell isn't the first business person to favor parking over trees. A group of business people in Des Moines have been fighting for several months to save parking spaces. The parking removal was ordered to allow two extra lanes of traffic and make the

stretch safer, but the business people argued that the loss of on-street parking would scare customers away.

Both the Des Moines business people and Powell don't see parking garages or off-street parking lots as solutions to their problems. But garages or lots provide more spaces on a given block of land — and shoppers are more likely to be closer to their store than if they have to search for an on-street parking space.

More importantly, the trees make downtown Lincoln more attractive to residents and visitors alike. It's more pleasant to walk downtown with trees around because they make the area more colorful and less confining than the average "concrete America" business district. Also, if the trees come down, Lincoln's beautiful Christmas-light display would have nowhere to go.

Adding trees to Lincoln's downtown was a good idea 10 years ago. They've become so much a part of the downtown scene that it would be a shame to take them out in the name of more concrete. Let's not mess with a good thing.

In a paragraph. . .

Scholarships taxed

The time is 8:25 a.m. and your typical student is driving frantically through the university parking lots looking for a parking space. The university has a habit of overfilling their parking lots leaving many students angered. Maybe the university should try and sell the proper amount of permits or maybe students should take more classes in the afternoon and not worry about the morning parking hassles.

● The Omaha World-Herald reported last week that Nebraska has one of the highest percentages of men filing with the selective service. The paper reported a 99 percent filing rate. Not bad. Those who do not register lose many benefits from the government including any form of financial aid.

● The Chronicle for Higher Education reported that many students receiving scholarships this fall may have to pay new taxes on part of the money, if Congress passes the tax-reform bill as expected. The bill imposes taxes on the portions of scholarships and fellowships that do not cover tuition and certain other

expenses.

The Chronicle reported that some campus officials have begun to worry that many students would have to take out loans to pay the new taxes. They argue that it does not make sense for the federal government to do something that would require students to borrow more.

The bill provides an interesting twist. It's a bit unusual to have to borrow money to pay for taxes on a scholarship. Scholarships enable students to ease the financial hardships of school not increase them.

● The Chronicle also reported that women are flocking to graduate school in record numbers, and many are specializing in fields that were dominated by men a dozen years ago. As a result, when higher-education institutions look for replacements for the large number of senior professors who will retire within the next 15 years, plenty of female faculty members will be available.

UNL is one of those institutions. If the trend holds true, Nebraska may see more women professors. It looks promising.

Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the fall 1986 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are Jeff Korbelik, editor; James Rogers, editorial page editor; Gene Gentrup, managing editor; Todd von

Kampen, editorial page assistant and Tammy Kaup, associate news editor.

Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents.

Covetousness wrecks society

Insatiable appetites keep Americans from realizing pleasure

Modern culture turns the idea of freedom on its head in advancing the first fundamental of popular Americana: Freedom means license. Irrespective of the politician's label — liberal or conservative — the maximization of pleasure is held to be the primary goal of human life. While modern conservatives and liberals disagree on how society's whims are to be indulged, the fact that politics should be directed toward this end goes unquestioned.

In the land of consumption, the appetite is God. In times gone by, a critic might have argued that "covetousness" characterizes our culture. "Covetousness," there's a term rarely heard today — it smacks of the archaic, sort of like "fornication" being used to describe "intimacy" between two unmarried people. Of course, given that the tenth commandment is "thou shall not covet," one might expect the idea to receive more attention than it has — especially in a nation as churched as ours.

Yet even among this group in modern America, the notion that covetousness is a sin receives slight acknowledgement (probably because it hits too close to home for the American Christian). An aged Roman Catholic priest reportedly once noted that even after decades of hearing parishioners' confessions, he had never heard anyone confess to violating the injunction against coveting.

But social rather than theological reflection is the stress here. And the social implications of a culture of coveters is profound. George Will brooded in his essay "Statecraft as Soulcraft," that "modern political philosophy has transformed a fact (man's appetitive nature) into a moral principle: Man should be allowed, even encouraged, to do what he most desires to do..."

Well, since maximizing pleasure is the priority of our society, one would

think that, overall, people today are much happier than those in years past who were confined by strictures against ostentatious displays of wealth and such. Yet the opposite characterizes modern cultures.

Take, for example, the goal of all politicians, namely, increasing the standard-of-living. While a reasonable person might expect satisfaction to increase linearly with the provision of material goods, the insidious covetousness of modern America has resulted in an actual decrease in satisfaction. This is particularly true in today's world due to the existence of "provisional goods," to borrow a phrase from UNL professor Wally Peterson.

In his article "Power and Economic



Jim Rogers

Performance" Peterson explains the role of positional good as creating the irony of unfulfilled consumers in the midst of an over-abundance of goods: "Because many more people are able to purchase goods and services once available to a few, the quality of these positional goods by ever larger numbers of people causes them to lose their uniqueness, which is to say that the individual can no longer feel superior to others by consuming them. ... All too often, the fruit of material economic progress is frustration, despite the fact that market capitalism has been extraordinarily successful in satisfying basic material needs..."

The cruel irony of Western materialism is that the more we have, the more

others want, and the more others have, the less satisfied we feel. So we buy yet more and more, and want and want...

Human relationships in this sort of society draw frighteningly close to the "Life-and-Death struggle" found in Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit" (as interpreted by Boston University professor, J. N. Findlay): "(E)ach subject wishes to be the sole centre of active universality and to risk all in asserting his claims. Such a policy, however, threatens to deprive each subject of the recognition he demands, and hence the struggle develops into one for a sovereign position among actively universal subjects, all others being wholly subordinated to this one (Lord and Bondsman). But this one-sided aspiration is also self-frustrating, since the recognition one receives from a pale reflex of oneself can be no true recognition, and will in fact impoverish the receiver..."

So today our society is composed of individuals envying others, and begrudging others' successes. While life in centuries past may have been "nasty, brutish, and short" today's life, in spite of "all" that we have, may truly be much worse: Perhaps hell is where the heart is.

Our forefathers, if they can stand to watch the pathetic sight of this neurotic society awash in a guilt of material possessions these same forefathers didn't dream possible, must watch the sight with profound grief. After all, unlike us, they labored and sacrificed so that we, their children, could have a life better than theirs. Their grief is caused by the one attribute that they could not leave us but that we should have learned for ourselves: sense enough to be grateful for what we do have rather than covet what we don't, and sense enough to avoid the vanity of enthroning our bellies as the national deity.

Royko Hunt-ing for some answers in case of the singing millionaire

One of the strangest people ever I've met as part of my job was H.L. Hunt, the oil tycoon who was once considered the world's wealthiest man.

In his twilight years, Hunt, who seldom spoke to reporters, would call me when he visited Chicago and to be interviewed.

It wasn't clear why he wanted to talk to me, although I wondered if he planned to convert me to his way of thinking, which was so far right that he made Barry Goldwater sound like a pinko.

For example, one of his pet political theories was that a person should cast as many votes as he had dollars.

That, of course, would put the selection of presidents and Congress in the hands of a few billionaires like Hunt, which he thought was only fair. He didn't see any logic in a guy who was broke casting a vote.

We'd sit in his hotel suite, sipping Coke — he shunned liquor — while he reminisced about how he had started as a young poker-shark in Southern Illinois, bought Texas oil leases, and wheeled and dealt his way to billions.

Sometimes he sang. That's right, sang. He had written and published an awful novel about his ideal society — where the rich had the votes — and he composed a song to go with it.

He would sing in an off-key, reedy voice, bobbing his head to achieve a tremolo. An audience of one, I'd listen to one of the world's richest men tweeting like a plump-faced bird.

I even took him on a radio news show I used to do in the morning. Dan Price, the co-host, said: "Who's this?" I said: "H.L. Hunt, the richest man in America. He is going to sing for our audience."

And Hunt did. About a dozen listeners promptly phoned to ask if their

radios were malfunctioning or if we had gone nuts.

I never was sure what to write about Hunt after our interviews, other than that he was quite the oddball. This didn't bother him, but he took offense when I wrote that he wore a cheap suit. He mailed me a tailor's receipt for \$800. I wrote back that I might become a tailor.

Hunt is now gone. He died in 1971, leaving most of his billions to a horde of children he sired by four wives. He was, incidentally, a bigamist. When you have that kind of money, who bothers with minor legal details?

And today I can't help laughing when I think about Hunt and his political theories, and the plight that his

Mike Royko



three most famous sons are in.

As you probably have read, a bunch of banks are suing the Hunt brothers, Lamar, Nelson and Herbert for more than \$770 million in unpaid loans.

They got into hock for this incredible sum because their greed boiled over a few years ago. Already billionaires, they secretly tried to corner the world silver market, figuring they could drive up the price, sell, and pick up a few billion more.

But before they completed the scheme, the silver prices slumped and they wound up losing a few billion instead.

So they had to go to several banks and ask for a billion-dollar loan to cover

their losses.

If you've dealt with banks, you might think that would be an impossible request. Some working stiff's can't persuade banks to lend them the price of a new siding job for the three-flat.

But banks are eager to please customers like the Hunt brothers. What's the problem, boys? You tried to corner the world silver supply and got caught? Hey, no problem. How many hundred million you need?

Now the banks are upset because the Hunts aren't keeping up with their payments. And they're trying to grab some of the Hunt oil companies.

Being labeled as deadbeats might embarrass some people. But the Hunts were indignant. They turned around and sued the banks for suing them and have asked for billions in damages. The rest of us might think about that route — not making the mortgage payments, then suing the bank for being pesty.

The Hunts have also tried to avoid losing their main stash by placing much of it under bankruptcy court protection.

The high-priced lawyers and federal judges will have to thrash out who owes what to whom. And the nice thing about this drama is that no matter who loses — the Hunts or the banks — they probably deserve it.

But if the Hunts are eventually wiped out, as some financial experts predict, it might cause me to rethink my opinion of old H.L.'s political ideas.

In the old man's perfect society, anybody without assets who showed up to vote would be given the bum's rush. If they go broke, that would be the fate of Lamar, Nelson and Herbert.

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