

# Editorial

**Daily Nebraskan**

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## Budget melodrama Delay causes deficit growth

Once again we're seeing ample proof in the news from Washington that September not only signals the start of fall and the football season. It also means the first act of the annual "government-by-continuing-resolution" melodrama.

For those who don't know, a continuing resolution is a catch-all spending bill that Congress needs to pass to keep the government running after Oct. 1, the start of the federal budget year. Its contents vary from year to year, but its purpose is always the same: to make up in a matter of days all the budget work Congress is supposed to have finished weeks before. It's another example of why the federal deficit is so large — over \$210 billion this year and still climbing.

Twelve years ago, Congress passed a law meant to make itself pass the budget quickly and with as much scrutiny as possible. The House and Senate are required to pass a non-binding budget resolution — a blueprint for spending — early in the spring so that 13 bills that actually authorize the spending can be passed before Oct. 1. With the entire summer to work on the bills, it was thought, Congress could review every spending program and control or eliminate deficits.

It hasn't worked. Fewer than half of the 13 spending bills pass each year because budget resolution debate drags on well into the summer. This year, not one of the 13 has been passed with less than a week to go, although the defense budget bill and perhaps one or two others probably will be passed. So Congress has drawn up another continuing resolution, which has a total value of about \$500 billion — half the overall budget.

There's no better villain in the budget melodrama than this practice. Although a few big-ticket spending items may be debated their identities depend upon those spending bills that didn't pass — most programs

simply are renewed for the next year with little or no change. Since there's no time to evaluate the entire bill closely, many wasteful or useless spending programs go unchallenged.

The continuing resolution also is a tempting target for election-hungry members of Congress who want to tack on extra spending. The strategy works for two reasons: the president has no power to eliminate certain spending items without vetoing the entire bill, and the bill's passage is absolutely necessary to keep the most vital government services going.

With the passage of the Gramm-Rudman deficit-reduction law, another ballet has been added to the dance card. Congress is tiptoeing around trying to meet the law's \$144 billion limit on the deficit by selling something here, raising fees there, but mostly shifting spending around so that it falls under this year's budget instead of next year's. Rep. Marvin Leath, D-Texas, brilliantly described what's going on: "We're about to pull the ultimate scam. Everybody's included."

Who will stop this game? Definitely not Congress; it's proven it doesn't have the stomach to kick the spending habit. Certainly not President Reagan; without a line-item veto (which Sen. J.J. Exon, D-Neb., tried unsuccessfully to give him last week), he has no real power to trim back pork-barrel spending. The voters could stop it, but that would take throwing out those in Congress who allow the game to continue. And nearly everyone seems to have some pet program that those people made possible.

So the melodrama goes on without a final curtain while everyone wrings hands and screams that this runaway deficit and runaway spending has got to stop. No one wants to take the blame for it all, but a careful look at the budget system suggests there's plenty of blame to go around.

## In a paragraph...

Women filtering into Maryland's politics

A two-woman race for political office is not unique to Nebraska any more as more and more women are finding their ways into the political circle. As everyone knows Nebraska has received national attention for the fight for governor between Kay Orr and Helen Boosalis. Maryland finds itself in a similar situation.

Women won both party nominations as candidates to succeed Maryland Sen. Charles Mathias. Barbara Mikulski, a veteran of Baltimore politics, won the Democratic nomination and Linda Chavez, a former White House aide, received the Republican one.

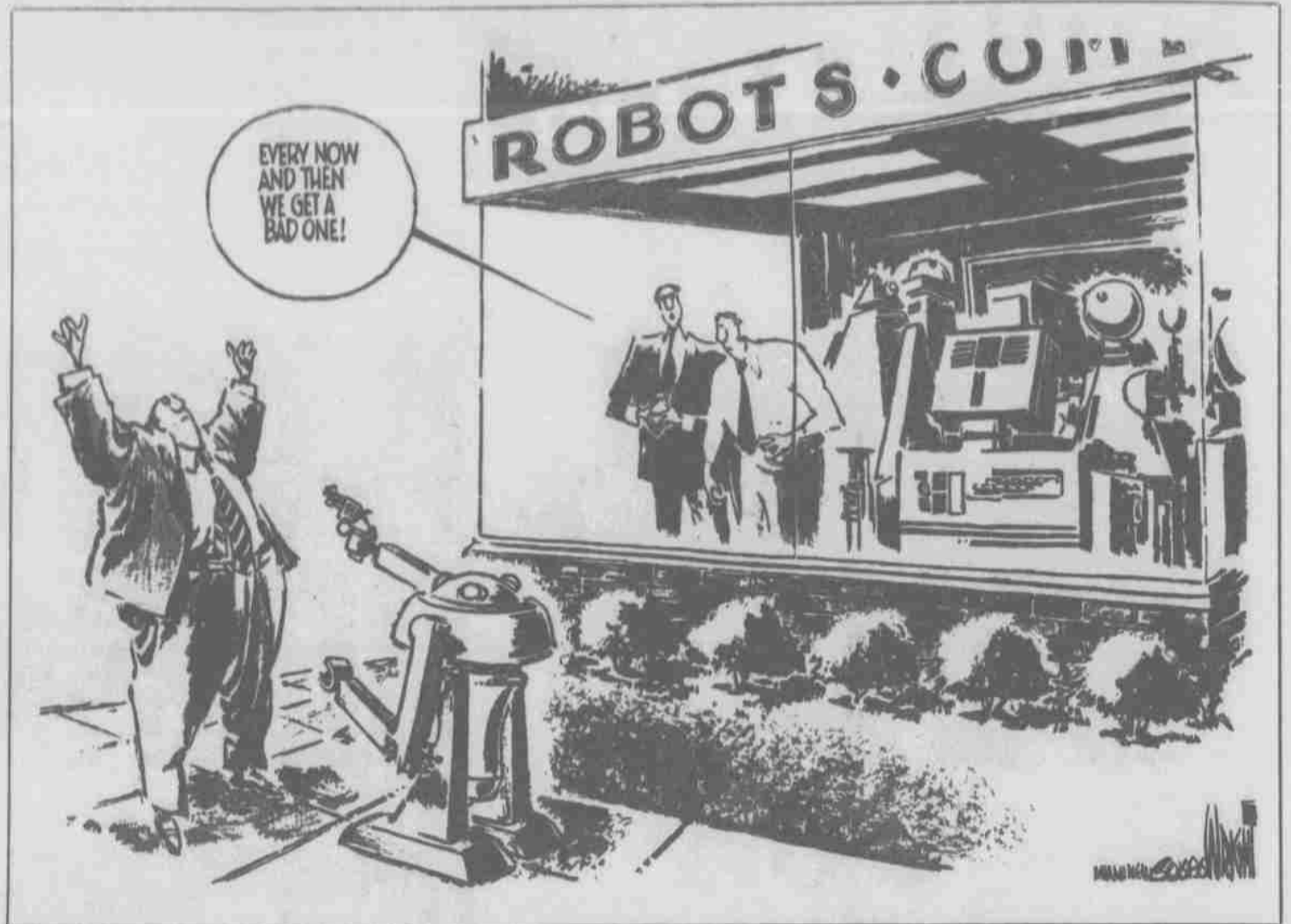
It's nice to see that women are starting to filter into the once male-dominated political

scene.

● Former pro football player Bubba Smith has decided not to do commercials for Lite Beer. He became dismayed when he appeared at his alma mater's homecoming and the college students yelled the beer's slogans (Tastes great, less filling) instead of cheering the team.

The concerns of a prominent entertainment figure may make people take note of some of the problems of alcohol abuse.

● On the same note, liquor stores have been offering an alternative to beer with alcohol: a beer with no alcohol. Consumers can indulge in the fine beer taste and not worry about the consequences of too much alcohol.



## 'Touching' teacher charged

How to think: does touching a child constitute sexual assault?

It's rare that a problem about which I don't know how to think presses upon me. Now, the question of "how to think" is quite different from what to think. There are a lot of everyday events about which I don't know what to think. That is, I don't have enough information to evaluate or have not carefully reflected upon the problem.

The question of what to think is preceded by the approach to the question — the "how to think" problem. There are many problems for which I don't have a defined approach. Problems in physics, chemistry, etc., raise questions about which I don't know how to think. But those questions don't press themselves upon me; I don't feel as though I have to think about those problems.

There are some problems, though, that press themselves upon me and I also don't know how to approach them. These are mainly phenomena that personally affect me. For example, I recall that when philosophy professor Hardy Jones — a teacher for whom I had great respect — committed suicide several years ago, I didn't know how to think about the event.

My father, following popular advice on suicide survivors, told me not to feel guilty. But that advice was inapplicable because if I felt guilty I would have had an approach and would not have been struggling over the "what to think" question. As it was I hadn't even gotten to the stage of thinking about guilt. (Of course, I never felt guilty, I didn't shove him off the building, after all.)

Last week the feeling of psychological anomaly reasserted itself with the conviction of my eighth-grade music

teacher on one count of sexual assault on a child (He was found not guilty on two other counts).

The entire event is fraught with problems of how to approach it. When I think about the event I just come up with, "on the one hand," "but, then, on the other hand..."

You see, the problem is that my teacher was a "touching" teacher. When speaking with students he was always quick to put an arm around the shoulder or provide a reassuring touch. The touches always seemed to be an expression of concern and not sexual in nature. We all know lots of people like that. That is, people for whom physical contact while communicating is part of their communication.

**Jim Rogers**



The charge on which my teacher was found guilty was the count where he had stuck his hand in the back pocket of the child (which everyone admitted occurring) and "wiggled his fingers" (which was in dispute). There's no question, at least in my mind, that sticking one's fingers in another's back pocket is an intrusive act. The question is, though, was that the first step along the road to serious sexual molestation, or was it simply an intrusion based on the misjudgment of an individual for whom physical contact while communicating is natural?

## What candidate could possibly lose with God as campaign manager?

Salts Grobnik looked up from his newspaper and said: "Boy, I'd sure like to get out there in the streets and work a precinct for this guy." "This Rev. Pat Robertson, the television preacher who is thinking about running for president."

I didn't know you were part of his flock.

"I'm not, but I like politics and this Robertson has really got some heavy clout going for him."

What kind of clout?  
"He says that God wants him to run. How can you beat that for an endorsement?"

That is impressive.  
"You bet. The way Robertson talks, it sounds like God is his campaign manager, his pollster and fund-raiser. And that's heavy. You can say what you want about the backing of the AFL-CIO, or

bit business, or this or that ethnic leader. But when you get the All Powerful behind you, hey, there's been nothing like that since Dick Daley has been gone."

Or even Tammany Hall.

**Mike Royko**



"Right. Robertson could do a radio commercial, and at the end, when the voice says, 'This commercial paid for by the citizens for Robertson — and endorsed by God Almighty,' that is going to make ears wiggle."

There is no question that my teacher shouldn't have done what he did; the question is whether the guy simply went beyond the limit of polite society (for which he needed to be rebuked and firmly told of expected social limits), or whether the intrusion was so wrong that only the judicial system could adequately mete out the penalty. I don't know.

An additional factor to consider is the rumor circulating the police department — and I don't vouch for its veracity — that the children who testified at the trial were coached to paint a molestation scenario.

So any approach to the problem seems fraught with substantial difficulty. How should I think? Sexual assault on children is an ugly specter that has cast a pall over American society. There is no room in civilization for those who prey upon children. But did it happen? Or was a man's lifelong vocation destroyed because he pressed the limit of socially acceptable touching — even though he never dreamed that the touch could be interpreted sexually.

On the one hand, society couldn't afford to wait and see if sexual abuse was really on the mind of this teacher. To do so would have been to risk permanent injury to the children under his care. On the other hand, where the activity stopped seems insufficient to argue that the next step of molestation actually would occur. But on the other hand . . . But on . . .

My mind hurts, and my soul aches; whither be the path of truth?

Rogers is an economics graduate, a law student and Daily Nebraskan editorial page editor.

I would think so. "Especially if they get an announcer with a real deep voice and put him in an echo chamber. And I wonder, you think maybe Robertson could do a TV commercial with God in it?"

I don't think God has ever done a commercial before. Not even for American Express.

"Well, then if he can't get Him in person, maybe he could do one like those old DeMille movies, where the sky has got all those big clouds and Pat Robertson is standing on a mountain, and a voice rumbles down from the clouds and says: 'I want all of you down there to vote for Pat Robertson, understand? You don't want no floods, do you?'"

Could be very effective.

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