

Editorial

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No more tractors

Lab may lose money, prestige

Tractor testing doesn't sound all that glamorous, but it's something that has brought UNL a certain amount of fame and lots of money over the years. Now that success has been ruined, and apparently all we can do is cry.

UNL's tractor testing lab, located on East Campus, is the United States' only university tractor testing lab. It's been operating since a state law was passed in 1920 requiring tractors sold in Nebraska to pass tests at the lab. Tractor manufacturers gradually turned to UNL as the place to test their products and paid a total of between \$300,000 and \$350,000 in an average year for the tests.

Then the Legislature fixed something that wasn't broken. LB768, passed this year, changed Nebraska's standards for tractor tests to conform with international standards. The fallout has been shocking. Testing at the UNL lab is down 60 percent this year, and lab officials fear the lab will do no tests at all in 1987.

It sounds like the Legislature's intentions were innocent enough. The thinking, according to the Omaha World-Herald, was that the U.S. Commerce Department would make the UNL lab the official U.S. test center for the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), which sets the international standards for tractors. But the Commerce Department hasn't

even decided whether the United States will join OECD, much less whether the UNL lab will be the test center. In the meantime, tractor manufacturers are testing in Europe, where testing costs are only one-fifth of those at UNL.

Imperial Sen. Rex Haberman, sponsor of the bill that caused all the trouble, told the World-Herald that tractor industry officials sold state and university officials on changing the law. They said the UNL lab could be named the official OECD test center in the United States with little trouble. Now that the testing business has gone elsewhere, he said, "you have to wonder if we were all sandbagged."

But it matters little who fooled whom at this point. Louis Leviticus, chief engineer of UNL's lab, says the lab could be out of business soon unless the Commerce Department starts to act. Tractor manufacturers have little reason to support making UNL the official test center if they can save thousands of dollars by testing overseas. So don't hold your breath.

Although lab officials are looking for alternative business, there seems to be little anyone can do to bring business at UNL's tractor testing lab back to its former levels. At a time when UNL needs all the income it can get, it's a shame that all that money and prestige has gotten away.

Report makes sense

Education needed in AIDS battle

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop counseled well in releasing a recent report on AIDS. The gist of the report is that more education is needed to help control the burgeoning problem.

And burgeoning it is. Koop estimated that upwards of 180,000 people will die from the disease in five years. That's up from the current figure of 15,000. Conservative estimates indicate that 1.5 million people are infected with the virus and are able to spread it.

Because there is no cure or vaccine in sight, prevention is currently the only method of fighting the advance of the disease. And prevention is where Koop focused his remarks.

Experts are virtually unanimous in agreeing that casual, non-sexual contact will not spread the disease. A growing number of heterosexuals join intravenous drug users and homosexuals as the disease's victims. The sexual link is the most significant.

In educating adults Koop counseled care in choosing sex partners and said, "Couples who engage in freewheeling casual sex these days are playing a dangerous game." Koop rightly urged people to know and talk with sex partners and potential sex partners.

The second major emphasis of the report is geared toward educating children. He urged education beginning as early as the third grade. The thrust of the education would be to encourage "open discussions about sexual practices" and begin to educate children to "avoid behaviors that can lead to exposure to the AIDS virus."

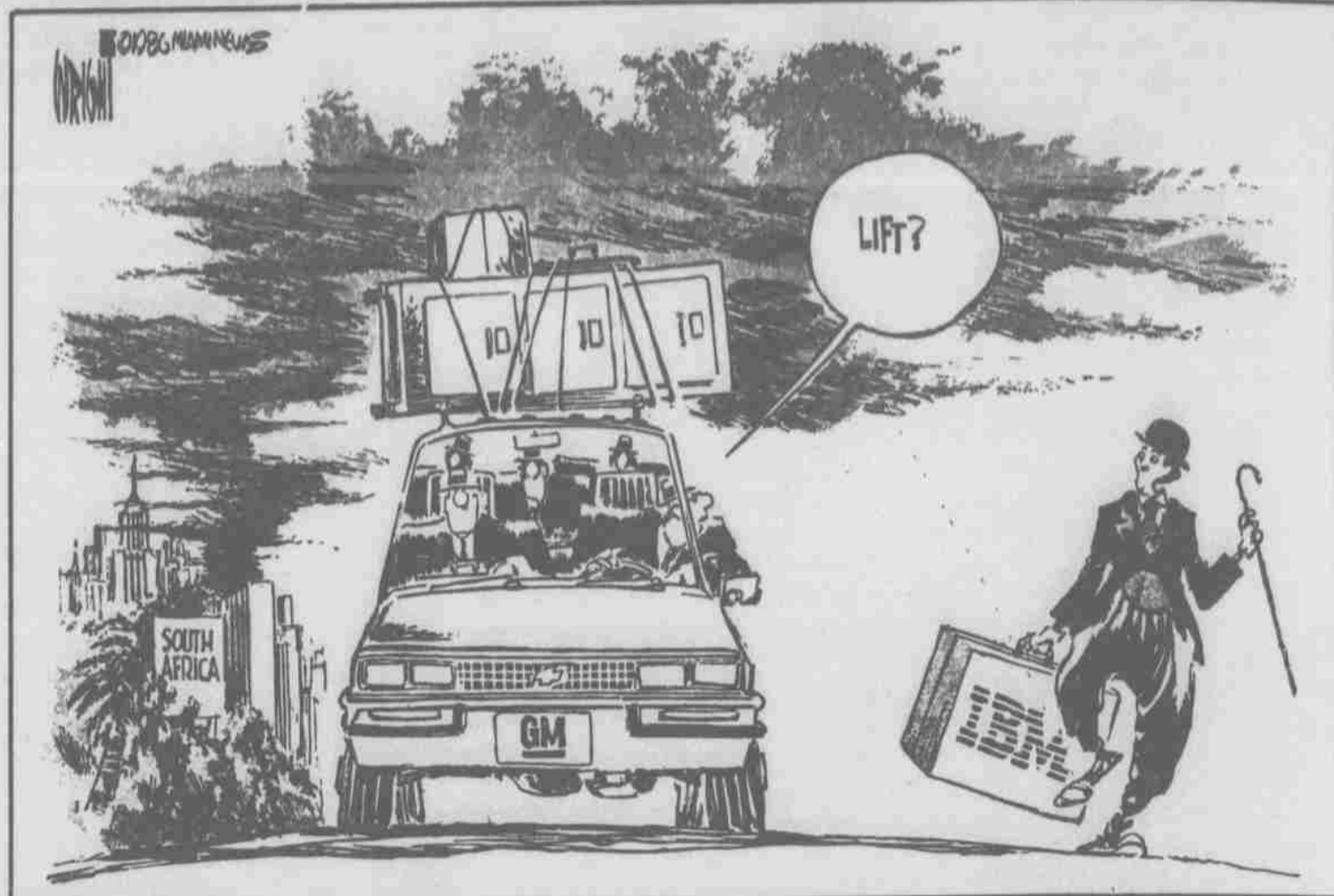
That claim is somewhat surprising, coming from an administration as well known for its cultural conservatism as for its economic conservatism.

Koop's urging is as far as the U.S. public can go today. The responsibility for sexual behavior lies squarely upon the public's shoulder, and increased education is one way of effectively discharging this responsibility.

Editorial Policy

The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the regents, who established the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper.

According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student editors.



The romance of poverty

To leave it all behind and go in quest of pink flamingos

In the most sordid areas of our cities, there is a class of people we always try to avoid. We try to avoid them because they represent everything we're not supposed to be in a capitalist society: apathetic, penniless, dirty, drunk and devoid of ambition. I'm talking about those romantic creatures of "urban blight," the photojournalist's favorite subjects and the bleeding-heart liberal's walking paradigms of pathetic "human waste" and pity.

Bums and bag ladies. The myth of the street person and the hobo has fascinated us for centuries. To the ambitious, they are examples of what one will turn out to be if one doesn't work or get an education. But many of us secretly admire those tattered street urchins and drifters we are taught to hold in high contempt, for they represent the romantic wanderer we would all like to be.

In the drone of daily life, filled with obligatory school, work and responsibilities, we often wonder what it would be like to just drop everything and pursue a life of carefree travel and poverty. Sometimes it looks so easy... and tempting. Quit your job, wear trashy clothes and wander the streets, asking sympathetic businessmen for a spare dollar or cigarette.

And if you were to get cold and hungry, you could just amble into the nearest city mission and ask the benevolent social workers to feed you and save your soul.

But we know there's much more to such a lifestyle. We would become social travesties, stared at and pitied by society. Maybe a kind, caring photojournalist would come to our part of town and snap our picture, thinking of us as perfect examples of



Scott Harrah

"moving human turmoil" that an editor would love to lay out in a magazine or newspaper article about urban blight.

Literature always has been the ultimate poetic forum for bums, bag ladies and drifters. Beat legend William S. Burroughs is the archetypal literary derelict. Burroughs plays the role of a cavalier wandering heroin addict who roams through the steamy regions of Mexico City and Tangiers writing about a life full of cheap sex, drugs and drifting.

Perhaps the most respectable, glamorous form of drifting is being a wandering expatriate artist a la Hemingway, Fitzgerald and Stein, writing about the doomed, wealthy dregs of Europe.

The most desired class of bums and bag ladies is the jet set immortalized in Fellini's "La Dolce Vita" and a plethora

of Harold Robbins potboilers. Unlike their street counterparts, jet-setters have plenty of money. In fact, they have so much money that they don't need to be constructive, so they try to think up creative ways to destroy themselves so people like Fellini can make movies about their creative decadence and "moving human turmoil."

I lived part of my childhood in Seattle, the West Coast's mecca for bums and bag ladies. The locals insist that Seattle's waterfront district is the original "Skid Row." In the 1800s, companies purportedly used to slide all the fine Northwestern lumber down the steep hills of the city to the piers on the bay, where cargo ships would load all the wood. The area became known as "Skid Row" because of this process; and it was also a notorious haven for unemployed sailors, wayward Alaskans, prostitutes and the scum of society.

Today, the area is a tourist venue, but the street people still abound there. They stand around the gentrified bars, boutiques and gift shops and open air markets, moving through the salty air that reeks of the bay and all the pungent salmon canneries that dot the pier. If you wait around, you can see a Midwestern tourist snap their picture. "Get the camera!" the tacky tourists squeal. "It's urban blight!"

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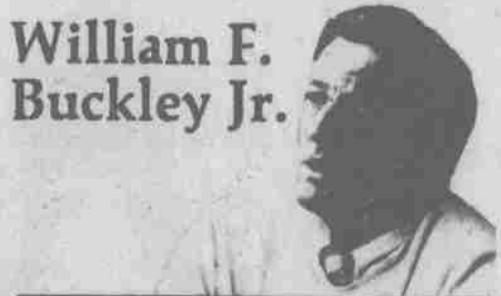
European allies do an about-face on desirability of missile reduction

When Secretary of State George Shultz was told by a reporter in the hot hours following the breakup of the Reykjavik summit that he looked "tired and disappointed," Shultz replied that this was easy to explain: He looked tired and disappointed because he was tired and disappointed.

But the trouble appears to be with the nature of Shultz's disappointment. He seems to be saying that if only the Soviet Union had been a little more relaxed about the Strategic Defense Initiative, for example by accepting the promise not to deploy for 10 years and permitting in the meanwhile research and moderate testing, why then all the balance of the agreements would have been ratified, ushering in the millennium, or something close to it. Instead we are discovering, inch by inch, day by day, that the improvised arrangements in the hot flushes of the exchanges between Reagan and Gorbachev would have been disastrous in their implications.

When you read reactions to Reykjavik, bear in mind that any commentator above the grade of GS-11 needs to

precede any statement about the summit by reciting the obligatory soliloquy deploring nuclear bombs, beginning with a denunciation of Hiroshima and ending with a reference to the likelihood of a nuclear winter. So expect that, sit through it, play tic-tac-toe until it is done, and then begin to



William F. Buckley Jr.

listen. Here is what a single day's news brings in: David Shieler, in The New York Times: "Although a senior administration official insisted that Mr. Kohl (the chancellor of West Germany) supported the Reagan position on arms reductions, a spokesman for the chancellor, Friedhelm Ost, was quoted by Reuters as expressing reservations. According to the Reuters account, Mr. Ost told reporters that the West German leader

had sought assurances that if medium-range missiles were abolished in Europe, West Germany would not be left vulnerable to Soviet short-range weapons or conventional Warsaw Pact forces. Before the Reykjavik meeting, Mr. Kohl had urged that short-range nuclear weapons be included in the United States-Soviet discussions on arms reductions... The German government accepts the 50 percent reduction but thinks the discussions in Reykjavik for greater reduction could be a danger for Western Europe," Mr. Ost said. In keeping with the posture of optimism that has been carefully structured by the Reagan administration to recent days, American officials sidestepped inquiries on Mr. Kohl's questions and sought to paint a picture of broad accord."

Bear in mind that Kohl's government has elections coming up next January and will confront the Social Democrats which, although it was their own leader Helmut Schmidt who originally called for the installation of theater nuclear weapons in Europe, now takes the