

Editorial

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Jeff Korbelik, Editor, 472, 1766
James Rogers, Editorial Page Editor
Gene Gentrup, Managing Editor
Tammy Kaup, Associate News Editor
Todd von Kampen, Editorial Page Assistant

Iranian irony

First victory, now scandal

President Reagan's 1980 victory over Carter was due in no small measure to the Iran crisis and President Carter's perceived wimpishness on the issue. It is ironic that members of Reagan's administration should come under investigation for ignoring a number of laws implemented in response to that crisis.

However, the mess becomes infinitely more complicated with the additional revelation that money gained from Iranian arms sales was transferred to Nicaraguan *Contras*. The transfers took place during a time that Congress had made quite clear its thoughts on the matter of official support for the *Contras*.

Currently, a number of Congressional committees have indicated that they intend to investigate the matter, and the Justice Department has an ongoing investigation. Only confusion reigns with so many fingers in the pie.

The first step should be for President Reagan to appoint an independent counsel to lead the investigation in the mess. The Justice Department, headed by Attorney General Edwin Meese

is simply too close to the administration to guarantee a spirited and objective investigation. Although the basic outlines of the relationship between Iran, Nicaragua and the United States are known, the details have yet to be filled in. In order for the public to know that it has all the facts, an independent investigation is a requirement.

After this, when the 100th Congress convenes, one special panel, not unlike the one set up to investigate Watergate, should be appointed. Centralizing the Congressional investigation would greatly aid in an expedient handling of the matter.

The problem now is that everybody is getting half the story, and only half believing that. A centralized, independent investigation needs to be set up soon in order to quickly deal with the unseemly mess. President Reagan is well-known for commitment in the extreme to staff members. But in this case, he should commit himself zealously to upholding the law and order fully and unbegrudging cooperation of his administration with any investigations.

Pushing and Shoving

Reagan and the press both to blame

How's the saying go? Two wrongs do not make a right.

Who's at fault here? President Reagan and the American press.

Looking at the press' "extra-curricular" involvement in reporting the Iran and Contra arms dealings and Reagan's denouncement of that same press, there seems to be too much pushing and shoving by both sides.

Reagan, in a recent interview by Time Magazine columnist Hugh Sidey, said the press has been irresponsible in covering the arms scandal. He said by publicizing the arms sales to Iran, the press prevented the return of two additional hostages held by Iranian-backed terrorists in Lebanon.

He told Sidey: "What is driving me up the wall is that this wasn't a failure until the press got a tip from that rag in Beirut (Syrian-backed magazine) and began to play it up. I told them that publicity could destroy this, that it could get people killed. They went right on... The whole thing boils down to a great irresponsibility on the part of the press."

The president's concerns are understandable. But the Ameri-

can press would be doing a disservice to the American public by not letting them stay on top of what is happening. The press came under the same scrutiny by the administration during the Watergate years. It's not fair to compare the two incidents. Yet, the administration's handling of the press is strangely too familiar.

On the other side of the coin, a few members of the press can be criticized. Last week during Reagan's press conference too many journalists seemed to be editorializing instead of reporting. A press conference is not the place for reporters to make political statements against the president.

Reagan noted that he has "never seen the sharks (journalists) circling like they now are with blood in the water."

From a reader's standpoint and one of the television audience, Reagan's press conference looked just that way.

For the sake of the public, let the reporters dig up the information. They are not irresponsible... just doing their job. But in the same vein, journalists should leave editorializing for the editorial press.

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.

Iranian deal no Watergate

Reagan is not a crook and Nixon knew what he was doing

New revelations keep coming from Washington every day about the Iranian arms deal. Now Robert Dole wants the president to appoint a special — i.e. Watergate — committee to investigate the scandal.

Many experts are comparing this scandal to Watergate. The amazing thing about that comparison is that it shows that people — some people at least — still remember Watergate.

In the last few years it seems as if everyone has forgotten about Richard Nixon's sordid, little scandal. In a way this isn't surprising. Revisionist history is the latest fad. Blink your eyes and six million Jews didn't die. Blink your eyes and Richard Nixon didn't break the law. His attorney general, his secretary of commerce, his secretary of treasury, his chief White House aides, didn't go to jail. Isn't this revisionism grand?

Some try to portray Nixon these days as a senior statesman. If you fall for that you might as well appoint Al Capone as secretary of state. There's not much difference, except perhaps, that Capone, in his own peculiar way, was more honest.

People who defend Nixon pass off Watergate as just one of those things. It was something other presidents have done but they just didn't get caught.

Sorry, but other presidents haven't done those things. Not that they were lily white, but there's nothing whatsoever to show that any president ever engaged in criminal activities to the extent that Nixon did. The guy is a crook.

It's ironic that people are calling the Iranian affair Reagan's Watergate.

Geoff Goodwin



Reagan is stupid and inept but he is, basically, a decent, honest man. He simply has no concept of the cruelty that his policies create.

Still, Reagan is ultimately responsible for the policies of his government. If he didn't know what John Poindexter and Oliver North were up to, (logic tells us that if he knew, he probably didn't want to know the details), then he should have known.

We always hear that, if we follow history, we can learn from our mistakes. If Reagan follows history — and

somehow I get the idea that he doesn't — he'll learn from Nixon's bumbling and come clean right away. But politicians seldom learn from history (Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam is a good example) and chances are that Reagan will be less than forthcoming.

Actually, Nixon — and I never thought I'd say this — was probably a better president than Reagan. For all his dishonesty, he at least had an overall view of the world that was a bit more realistic than Reagan's Hopalong Cassidy, good guys wear white hats, bad guys wear black hats, cowboy mentality.

If Reagan had Nixon's experience and foresight you might have a decent president. But they both lack basic elements — honesty and intelligence — that any president should have. And so once again the Republicans have shot themselves in the foot.

It's too early to say what kind of damage Reagan will suffer because of this, but it wouldn't be going out on a limb to say that, considering the Democrats have regained control of the Senate, the next two years of Reagan's presidency are going to seem much longer to him than the first six.

Goodwin is an undeclared graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan night news editor.

Christian challenges unbelievers to let ideas flow, come out fighting

Yeah, it just goes to show ya. Write something with a Bible verse in it and everyone flies off the handle. Oh yes, oh yes, the religious right's on the march again. To arms, to arms; the new Dark Ages are at hand.

Sigh. Now, to fill in the antecedent. The day my pro-life column appeared two weeks ago, I was drawn into a discussion about it with a few colleagues. And one of them — a merchant in the "marketplace of ideas," mind you — raised the opinion that none of my Biblical references in the column should have been allowed in print. "This is a state newspaper, and quoting the Bible violates separation of church and state," he said.

His was an isolated opinion — but only in the context of that discussion. Three days later, the same line of thinking popped up in a guest opinion responding to a Christian's guest opinion opposing the proposed University Program Council Gay/Lesbian Committee. "By the way," the second opinion said, "biblical facts have no place in UPC's decision, as we do still have a thing called separation between church and state..."

The following day, a fellow columnist rebutted my pro-life piece with arguments such as this: "The Bible does have some gems in it, but to realistically expect it to have all the answers to the problems that beset the modern world is a little like setting out from Lincoln with one of Lewis and Clark's maps and expecting to find Portland."

To top it off, another columnist railed two issues later about "the religious right" which "always tries to use morality... to put things in perspective" and "is all for censorship when it comes to pornography because they say it will strengthen morals..."

Methinks it's time to respond. Yes, I'm a card-carrying member of the "religious right," or at least I've never heard a different name applied to members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Everyone's quite familiar with the stereotype, but I wonder how many really understand our thinking. Before I take up the secularist-atheist-unbeliever attempt to exclude us from public debate, I'll deal with what we feel.

Active Christians often are called "intolerant" because we're prone to tell non-Christians their ways are contrary to God's. We're condemned for being "judgmental" and trying to "force"

our opinions on others. If we gain enough votes to elect one of our own to office, they say, non-Christians will be burned at the stake in the name of a "perfect" society. They're too crazy to be trusted, right?

Well, I won't apologize for what we truly believe. Christians teach that every man and woman, including the



Todd von Kampen

Christian, is by nature incapable of following God's path. Only through the free gift, faith in Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross made eternal life possible, can anyone be saved. Those who don't repent of their sin, however, can't share that salvation and are headed for hell.

Believe it or not, when Christians tell unbelievers that, they do so out of love. It's known as "the doctrine of the lostness of man," which basically says, "When you realize people you know are going to burn in hell, you can't keep quiet." The unbeliever can scoff at this if he wishes, but that's how we feel. Because we love others and want them to be saved, to not preach the way to heaven — as some would demand we do — would be the worst kind of indifference.

By our own beliefs, however, we Christians know we can't force Christianity on others at all. The Bible says the saving faith comes from God alone; we can't save ourselves, nor can our own words save others. All we can do is repeat what God has said in the Bible and let him do the rest.

But are we not to be allowed to inject God's word into public debate?

Let's return to the word "intolerance" for a moment. Its root word, "tolerate," has two primary meanings in Webster's: "to not interfere with, allow, permit" and "to recognize and respect (others' beliefs, practices, etc.) without sharing them." The two meanings are cause-and-effect; by allowing A to speak, B is respecting A without necessarily sharing A's views.

If Christians were to stop non-Christians from preaching their doctrine of unbelief, unbelievers would righteously — and rightfully — charge Christians with "intolerance." Now think

back to the examples I cited earlier. Now unbelievers are attempting to keep Christians from preaching their doctrine — and the "tolerance" they demand for themselves is nowhere to be seen. They seek converts to their creed no less than Christians do, but only they are allowed to proselytize.

John Stuart Mill, a secular 19th-century British philosopher, would have shuddered at that. Even if people don't want to grant truth to an opposing opinion, he said, they should permit his beliefs to be disputed. "However unwillingly a person who has a strong opinion may admit the possibility that his opinion may be false," he wrote in "On Liberty," "he ought to be moved by the consideration that, however true it may be, if it is not fully, frequently and fearlessly discussed, it will be held as a dead dogma, not a living truth."

As a strong Christian, I'm not about to grant that non-Christians are right. Likewise, unbelievers aren't about to give in of their own accord. But each side ought to permit the other its day in court, if only to reinforce why it believes as it does.

And what's to lose? Christians can say those who don't repent will pay for it later, while atheists would say the religious are wasting their lives in pursuit of futility.

The nice thing about our system of government is that each side gets to implement its views if it can win enough votes. It's all right to be unhappy if "the other side" is in charge, but let's cut out the sour grapes. We'll let the unbelievers have their two cents worth if they grant us the same courtesy. We still think they're wrong, but we'll play fairly if they do.

Now, let's shake hands and come out fighting!

Von Kampen is a senior news-editorial an music major and is a DN editorial page assistant.

Letter Policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

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