

Editorial

It's good to be a SMART

That is, if good does exist, which it doesn't, or does it?

Winston Smith is a fool. You remember Winston, he's the main character of George Orwell's 1984. I, a Surely Modern and Right Thinker (SMART), know it is quite obvious that Smith is a fool.

Why, you ask (as if it really isn't patently obvious to all but the totally blind), is Smith a fool? Well, being a SMART, I usually don't condescend to answer useless questions, but I'll make an exception in this case . . . just this once.

Smith is a fool because he had the audacity — make that the incredible audacity — to affirm absolute truth. I'm sure you remember the scene: Smith's inquisitor wanted Smith to say that 2 plus 2 equals 3. Or at least grant the possibility that 2 plus 2 equals 3.

Well, Smith, silly fellow that he was, underwent excruciating torture because he insisted that 2 plus 2 equals 4. Of course, Smith caved in later, but only after an incredible (and vain) ordeal. Smith's insistence on absolutes was so, so . . . well, so, passe. He could have saved himself a lot of grief if he simply understood that truth is relative.

We SMARTS wouldn't make the same mistake. After all, SMARTS know beyond question (recall that I'm condescending to enlighten your dark souls) that virtues are mere opinion. Only in the dark ages did people assert absolute virtues. (Of course, certain cretins living in the age of us SMARTS still affirm absolute values.)

Beauty, Goodness and Truth were the demonic triumvirate of absolute virtues maintained by the fools of the past. Those mischievous miscreants actually thought that all enlightened minds could affirm the existence of objective, absolute virtues. Such a notion truly merits being called the hobgoblin of the Age of the Arrogant Ass.

The triumvirate of virtues stand or fall together. Beauty was the first to go. "Beauty is in the mind of the beholder" is the wise axiom that shames the false opinion. If some soul wants to assert that a pile of shit is truly Beautiful, so be it. Who are we SMARTS to force our opinions on a fellow SMART?

I remember a music teacher of my

Jim Rogers



childhood telling me that my performance of a certain passage was rather ugly. I said, "Who are you, god? Beauty is in the mind of the beholder." What a beautiful sentiment.

Goodness was the next virtue to go. After all, who's to say what's good? There's a lot of honest disagreement on the subject, and SMARTS know that means there's no one right answer. Right? (Of course, SMARTS ask this question only out of politeness; the fact that there is no right, is right.)

After all, Hitler and Gandhi disagreed on whether or not genocide was permissible. SMARTS don't condescend to debate this vain question; we simply say we don't know. Who was Gandhi to say something was wrong, . . . god? Actually, Gandhi, in insisting on an absolute standard of morality, was an Arrogant Ass and a silly fool just like Winston Smith.

Rodney A. Bell II, a UNL SMART, says that morality is a matter of "people's opinion." He's right. Who is anyone to force their opinion on Hitler . . . are they god? Stupid little snots that assert absolute moral standards just burn us SMARTS up. People that assert abso-

lute morality are bad. Well, Beauty's down the toilet, and so is Goodness. Truth, the third virtue, needs to be unceremoniously dumped in the sewer with the rest of the primitive garbage. Winston Smith, that pathetic soul, just sat (or lay) there. Affirming absolute truth. Tsk, Tsk. If he only knew that the position "There is no absolute truth" is true, he would have saved himself a lot of suffering at the hands of Big Brother.

When I was in the first grade, my teacher asked me what two plus two equaled. I said, and honestly believed, that it equaled three. "No, Jim" she said, "2 plus 2 equals 4." I said, "How do you know, are you god?" Nonetheless I was forced to recant my opinion: This wicked censorship of opinion continues to this day. Government schools still force students to assert that 2 plus 2 equals 4 and prohibit the expression of the perfectly valid opinion that 2 plus 2 equals 3. That's censorship plain and simple. I hope that after the ACLU releases the artistic energies of pornographers from obscenity statutes, they'll turn their own energies to this far more pernicious instance of censorship. After all the ACLU is full of SMARTS. Let the crying out! Free the teacher to teach 2 plus 2 equals 3.

SMARTS assert no absolutes; we know all is relative and a matter of personal opinion.

SMARTS are Beautiful because we know there is no absolute beauty.

SMARTS are Good because we know there is no absolute good.

SMARTS know Truth because we know there is no truth.

Ah, with such wonderful consistency it's no wonder that we SMARTS are the only ones that are truly smart.

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Merry X-mas NU

A special session, a budget cut

Somehow, it was inevitable. Despite the hopes of NU students, faculty members and administrators for a year of relative safety, the university Wednesday received one of the worst Christmas presents possible.

They're cutting the budget again.

If you think you've heard this before, you have. Four times in the last six year, state government has taken money away from NU in the middle of the year. This time, Gov. Bob Kerrey proposes to trim \$1.6 million in state support for the university, or 1 percent of the amount the Legislature approved last June.

That 1 percent cut is deceptively small. In fact, it adds to the growing inability of NU to fulfill its educational mission due to minuscule yearly budget hikes and endless mid-year cuts. The reason for the upcoming special legislative session — a \$17 million state-budget deficit that must be erased by law — is clear. But continued calls for NU to take substantial shares of cuts cannot be justified.

Mid-year cuts are the worst kind for an institution like NU. The nature of the academic calendar means a school has to pay faculty members, schedule and conduct courses, enter into contracts and so on based on that calendar. When money is taken away in mid-year, the school has to suddenly "make do" with much less money than it counted on — and the effect is greater because some of the year's money has already been spent. Courses and course sections are canceled, classes grow even bigger, and students lose out.

Then, the next year, the school

sees elimination of courses and faculty positions and closing of degree programs students depended on having when they came there. There may have been a time when NU could avert shutting off students' educations by simple belt-tightening. But, as UNL Faculty Senate President Allen Blezek says, "I can assure them there's no more fat." Anyone intimately involved with NU knows that's true.

And there's the continued erosion of morale. Blezek says each succeeding budget slice "cuts more of the spirit and pride of the faculty members." Faculty members think about leaving — and have left. Students think of leaving NU or fleeing the state after graduation — and they have. And NU's ability to help Nebraska rise from its economic abyss continues to atrophy.

It's all been said before. Few seem to listen. As long as NU continues to get some money, some seem to think, the state is doing its duty. It's just not true. With every budget cut and tiny increase, a little more of NU dies. Someday, Nebraskans will find that "good old Nebraska U" is little more than a glorified degree mill — because it won't have the strength to put muscle into its education.

We don't see any way to stop the latest mid-year cut from happening. The die seems already to have been cast. Nonetheless, senators should know the consequences of the latest fall of the budget axe. Talking about the need for NU to "take its share" of cuts is fine — but if NU shares much more, its days as a fine and respected institution will soon run out.

In a paragraph . . .

Study shows state smokes less

In Monday's Daily Nebraskan, we reported that the percentage of Nebraskans who smoke is less than the percentage of Americans who smoke, according to a five-year study by the Nebraska Prevention Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse. Twenty-five percent of Nebraskans smoke, compared to the 30 percent national average. From 1980 to 1985 the number of male and female smokers in the state declined. Maybe all the media attention centering on the ill effects of smoking is starting to pay off.

The Crimson White, the University of Alabama's student newspaper, reported last week that the school started voluntary drug testing for some of the employees in its athletic department. The problem: The testing is not supervised as are the tests given to the athletes. Athletic director and football coach Ray Perkins instituted drug testing for athletes in January 1984. They tested for strength-enhancing steroids and street drugs. For the sake of the athletes, the

university should supervise all tests. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Two weeks ago the Los Angeles Times reported that Vice President George Bush has taken the early lead for the Republican nomination. The October Gallup Poll showed Bush receiving 57 percent of Republicans' and Republican-leaning independents' combined first- and second-place nominations votes.

"Jack the Snipper" has been reported on the University of Virginia campus. United Press International reported that someone has been sneaking up on women in the campus library and cutting off hunks of their hair.

"And on the eighth day God created rock 'n' roll." Earlier this week the Associated Press reported that Pope John Paul II enjoys modern music, including rock. To add to that, rock star Little Richard said that Rock 'n' Roll was invented by God, not the devil, and is planning a tour to prove it.

Without traitorous media tattlers, the Contras might be doing nicely

When I saw my conservative friend Grump, I turned up my coat collar and pulled my hat over my face. But he spotted me anyway. "Trying to hide, you despicable cur?" he said.

Something like that. "I don't blame you. If I had as much to feel guilty about as you, I'd crawl into a hole."

I've been thinking about it. "Then I assume you have seen the words of your Commander in Chief?" I was just reading them.

"You know, then, that he has found the culprit in this terrible mess?"

Yes. It says right here that it's the fault of the press. He says that his secret Iran deal was doing fine until the press opened its big mouth.

"That's right. So how do you feel about your seedy profession causing this national crisis?"

Terrible. But I'm also confused. "About what? You and your ilk and guilty. It's as simple as that. The whole pack of you should be tried for treason."

But shouldn't we be given a little credit for trying to be docile lapdogs? "As you should."

Of course. And when he said this country wouldn't negotiate with terrorists, did anybody argue?

"What was there to argue about?"

Nothing. We all agreed that we had to be tough on terrorists and those who support them.

"I would hope so."

So how were we supposed to know that it was our policy not to negotiate with terrorists or those who support terrorists except when the President decided that he wanted to negotiate with them?

"That was supposed to be a secret. Until you fools blew the whistle."

And I feel terrible about it. Except we didn't blow the whistle. The Iranians did. Some of them obviously wanted to make Reagan look stupid for trusting

them.

"But did you have to report it?"

If we didn't, the rest of the world's press would have anyway.

"That's no excuse."

It's the only one I can think of.

"Well, as the President says, the fate of the hostages is on your conscience."

I know, and we feel remorse because

Mike Royko



the President had such a good thing going. He'd ship some military hardware to Iran, Iran would get a hostage released, the President would go on TV and grin at the released hostage, and they'd kidnap another hostage, and we'd ship them some more military hardware, and they'd release another hostage, and he'd go on TV, and they'd kidnap another hostage . . .

"You're being a wiseguy."

Not at all. It was excellent foreign policy. The steady turnover of hostages stimulated trade between our nations and assured us of having a healthy Iranian cash flow to our friends the Contras.

"I'm glad you recognize the wisdom of his actions."

Of course I do. But wouldn't it have been simpler if he had just announced that we were going to sell arms to Iran to make them friendlier and get a few hostages released?

"Don't be ridiculous. That would have been a sign of weakness. He would have looked like a bigger wimp than Jimmy Carter."

But that's what he did.

"Ah, but he did it secretly. If you do it secretly, it means you are subtle and

sophisticated, not wimpish."

Of course. But now he's in trouble for lying.

"He didn't lie. He just didn't tell us what he was up to."

I suppose so. But by failing to tell Congress and the American people what was going on, he can also be in trouble.

"Not if he didn't know what was going on. Remember, those subordinates of his may have been doing all sorts of things that he didn't know about, so how can he be held responsible?"

That's true. But he could also be in trouble for not knowing what his own subordinates were doing in his name, couldn't he?

"Not if people realize what the facts are."

Well, what are the facts?

"That nobody would have known what he was doing even if he didn't know what he was doing himself if the press had just kept quiet about what he may or may not have been doing, or what somebody else may or may not have been doing without his knowing what they were doing."

But if he really didn't know what was going on, didn't the press do him a favor by letting him know what his subordinates were doing?

"Of course not. If what they did was what he wanted done, even if he didn't know he wanted it or that it was being done, then why bother letting him know?"

You make it all so clear. So the entire scandal is the fault of the press.

"Exactly."

Then I have one question.

Can I get a piece of that secret Swiss bank account?

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