

Editorial

Daily
Nebraskan

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Jeff Korbek, Editor, 472-1766
James Rogers, Editorial Page Editor
Lise Olsen, Associate News Editor
Mike Reilly, Night News Editor
Joan Rezac, Copy Desk Chief

Do numbers lie? Accurate indicators needed

"People vote their pocket-books" is an aphorism that can help explain President Reagan's election, reelection and personal popularity. The shift in popular perceptions of the economy from the dishevelment of the 1970s (high unemployment and high inflation) to the relative stability of the '80s corresponds rather nicely, in the public mind to the advent of Reagan in the White House.

In the '80s inflationary expectations were greatly dampened by the recession, and the unemployment rate dropped to a more or less (politically) acceptable level. Along with dropping inflation and unemployment rates, the economy has dropped on the list of important issues in the public's mind.

Nonetheless, the future state of the economy continues to concern the relatively few people who still pay attention to it.

One of the biggest concerns is that "proxies" for measuring economic activity are measuring the wrong phenomena. That is, many statistics, ostensibly pointing to an economy experiencing a boom in production, in fact are measuring only monetary or pecuniary levels. For example, is the historically high level of the stock market really an indicator of a "bullish" economy? Not necessarily. Stock prices represent the interaction of that commodity's supply and demand: They do not represent "real" impacts on the productive assets that represent the wealth of a society.

Another example of the predominance of the unproductive, pecuniary (or business-college) mentality over the productive (engineering) mentality is the expansion of productive assets.

In the past, a business owner (or the owner's representative) would indicate a desire to expand the business in order to meet consumer demand better and increase profits. This typically entailed the construction of new productive assets like factories. Such an expansion meant more jobs, more income and more real production.

Today, however, expansion means a transfer of assets. That is, merging with other already existing businesses. Thus, instead of expanding the entire pool of productive assets, today's businesses all too often simply transfer the same assets as one huge conglomerate gobbles up another.

The first point of success in other countries is that they emphasize real production as the measure of economic progress and not simply the transfer of paper between the offices of corporate attorneys. The former represents the entrepreneurial spirit that once made this country famous; the latter represents the legalistic spirit that makes this country infamous. In order to avoid economic stagnation in the near future, the American business community must once again concern itself with real production and end its suicidal infatuation with paper assets.

Letter

In the name of love and King, people can't forget his message

I would like to take time to thank the Daily Nebraskan for its coverage of our newest federal holiday (DN, Jan. 19), Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

While we have celebrated Lincoln's and Washington's commitment to excellence for many years, it is refreshing to see support for one of this century's greatest leaders. King's inspiration and goals were derived from others who also sought peace and unity for everyone — such as Jesus Christ and Mohandas Gandhi. King pledged an allegiance to a "love ethic": an idealistic belief that love, not force, would conquer the evil of racism, discrimination and violence against one another.

The DN covered a story about a minicourse offered at UNL. Having taken the course myself, I feel it is a course that people take not to "fill in an hour" on their schedules, but because King's teachings are beneficial to those who follow them.

The Culture Center, located in the Commonplace building, had a wonderful symposium last year honoring King. Attorney General Robert Spire spoke, as did a number of black leaders in the community.

While many of us don't remember much of King when he was alive, much of his teachings spread further than just in the United States. The rock group U2, from Ireland, has written a few songs in memory of King. One,

"(Pride) In the Name of Love," sparks a haunting paean to King's struggles and untimely death: "Early morning, April 4, shots ring high in the Memphis sky, freed at last, they took your life, but they could not take your pride."

Recently, Rev. Jesse Jackson claimed that there has been some progress in the decline of racism, but that "economic racism" still exists and is the most plighted to blacks around the world. King once said, "A man who won't die for something is not fit to live. The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy."

King believed in equality, peace and love — and he died because of it. Let us honor him by continuing with the pursuit of his dreams.

David J. Cox
senior
psychology

Letter Policy

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.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication.

Anniversaries show parallels

Groundless attack on the unborn resembles racial bigotry

There is something sickeningly ironic in the two anniversaries being observed this week. Monday we celebrated the birth of a tremendous American, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was shot down in his prime. Tomorrow we will mourn the death of some 20 million Americans who never had the chance for a prime. On both of these days, we remember those whose only capital offense was inconvenience in the first degree.

The plight of blacks in the history of America admits of sardonic parallels to the plight of the unborn over the last 14 years. Black slavery was first propagated and defended on the premise that the African Negro was not really human. Even our precious Constitution, whose bicentennial we celebrate as we speak, originally referred to the black as a "three-fifths person." Such demented thinking survived overwhelming evidence to the contrary for many decades.

Today it is the unborn child who is considered less than human. The motivations behind the pronouncement are complex, but there is none that is warranted by responsible thinking or supported by medical evidence. Yet the myth continues. And those who have historically been human-rights activists have mostly retreated to this camp of convenience and ease. We have returned to the philosophy that those whose humanity is for any reason in doubt do not deserve to be treated as human. Where would the black, the Native American and the woman be today had we always placed the burden of proof on the one who claimed equality?

But there are more ingenious arguments in the pro-abortion camp lately, which claim to be valid even if the unborn child is human. And it is here

that the parallel with the plight of the American black shows us most clearly how faulty the thinking is and what kinds of sinister games are really being played.

A popular defense of abortion on demand is, the charge that so many babies are unwanted and would only be born into a life of sadness, deprivation and rejection. One must ask how we would have reacted to one who argued in the 19th century that the indiscriminate killing of black children in America was warranted on the grounds that those children were doomed to a

mares come true.

Where is the line drawn between one person's convenience and another person's existence? Does the prospect that your actions, or even your presence, represent an infringement upon my succeeding in my goals and my desired lifestyle give me the right to remove you from the land of the living? I see little difference in the thinking that would allow the death of an unborn fetus on the grounds that its birth would wreck havoc for the mother and the thinking that allowed the repression of blacks because their freedom would cause economic turmoil and upset the goals of the slave owners. Again, the failure of the analogy escapes me.

This final attempt at justification demonstrates just how ad hoc the argument for abortion on demand has become. Stripped of medical or sociological justification, the forces have turned to an ethical argument that is unparalleled in the history of moral philosophy. Pardon me, but I immediately suspect any argument that asks me to consider untried and unproved theses in order to understand its reasoning. I suspect even more when that reasoning asks me to consider anything more important than a single person's right to choose if he will live or die.

This is a week when I shall weep twice. I have already wept for the shed blood of a leader who protested the distribution of freedom based on skin color. I will weep again for the shed blood of millions of potential leaders whose deaths cry out in protest against the distribution of freedom based on the luck of the draw.

Sennett is a graduate student in philosophy and campus minister with College-Career Christian Fellowship.

James Sennett



life of sadness. Or more closely parallel yet, how about slaughtering black children in Africa because they would stand a decent chance of being captured and exported as slaves? Surely the strong possibility that theirs would be a life of misery and pain would have been enough reason to justify their genocide, regardless of their humanity. The failure of the analogy is not readily apparent to me.

The more philosophical of the pro-choice supporters have argued recently that the question of the child's humanity is overridden by the demands of the personal freedom and autonomy of the mother. In other words, one person's right of choice could be greater than another person's right to life. This thinking represents our worst night-

Pregnancy policies still not perfect; child-rearing not for women only

There was a time when nearly every pregnant working woman was given special treatment. She was escorted — ever so chivalrously — right out the door.

In those bad old days, it was assumed that the one true path to equality and job security was to get employers to treat pregnant workers the way they treated other workers. Pregnancy, many of us argued, wasn't a disease, and pregnant workers weren't automatically incapacitated.

Legislation that outlined discrimination was born and passed in 1978. You couldn't fire a worker just because she was pregnant. But, on the other hand, you didn't have to make any allowances for the pregnancy. This was the sort of rigid equality we called progress.

There emerged out of this period a kind of pregnancy machism. To this day, many women, especially in the professional world, trade tales of how they finished their brief or newspaper story while having contractions every 10 minutes. Women in nontraditional jobs often have felt compelled to prove that they can put in as long a day as any man, even if it's the ninth day of the ninth month.

This bravado, or bravada if you prefer, was largely fueled by the fear that they would be punished for being "different." Pregnant women could be sure of their jobs only as long as they fit — no matter what shape they are in — into the same mold as men. As a policy, this makes as much sense as everybody's favorite clothing label: one-size-fits-all.

Gradually, we have been trying to make a midcourse correction in the path of equality. Young women who feel more secure in the workplace and yet more stressed by the expectations of being employee and mother have begun to insist that some leeway, some breathing room, some consideration, be given to pregnancy. One after another, states are devising and passing pregnancy disability-and-leave policies. But those of us who remember the bad old days have wondered: Can you devise a policy

that gives preferential treatment to pregnant women without it backfiring?

Enter the Supreme Court. Last week, five justices who range in philosophy from Scalia to Marshall upheld a California law that gives pregnant women some preference. California requires employers to grant up to four months of unpaid leave to women disabled by pregnancy and childbirth, even if such leaves are not granted for other disabilities.

This was a direct signal to the states that they can offer extra benefits to pregnant workers.

What next? The California law does raise the "ceiling" of benefits to pregnant women, but just a few inches. It only covers the physical disability of child-bearing, not child-caring. What working families need is a much wider support system "to have families without losing their jobs" and jobs without losing their families.

The Supreme Court has said that we may allow the special treatment of pregnancy. The decision is a real, but not a final, victory for working women. Another midcourse correction looms ahead in the path toward equality.

At this moment in change, we need to do more than just make it a bit easier for women to carry the double burden of work and home. We need to share the load. It's important to mute any disadvantage that employers find in hiring women. It's equally important to engage men in the earliest stages of their children's lives.

From this plateau, we can take the next step. We can write disability programs that cover all workers. We can legislate child-care leave that includes fathers, like the parental-leave bill Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.) is shepherding through Congress.

We have finally begun to raise the ceiling. Now it's time to raise the roof.

©1987, The Boston Globe Newspaper Company/Washington Post Writers Group
Goodman is a Pulitzer prize-winning columnist for the Boston Globe.

Ellen Goodman



The employer in question, California Federal Savings and Loan Association, said the state violated the federal law against discrimination. The S&L presented itself as a defender of equality, though in its case it was defending the right to treat all workers equally shabbily.

The decision, written by Justice Marshall, went to the core of the problem and said, "By taking pregnancy into account, California's pregnancy disability-leave statute allows women, as well as men, to have families without losing their jobs." But perhaps the most important line in the decision affirmed that the federal law was "a floor beneath which pregnancy disability benefits may not drop — not a ceiling above which they may not rise."

Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the spring 1987 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board.

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