

Editorial

Daily
Nebraskan

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Who's listening? Faculty wants higher quality

The UNL Chapter of the American Association of University Professors has made an impressive initiative aimed at combating the once creeping and now galloping mediocrization of UNL. Their crucial message, their desperate message, is that *immediate* action to increase professors' salaries needs to be taken.

The AAUP outlined four steps necessary to halt the movement toward academic bankruptcy of a once-great school: the ability to make substantive counteroffers to professors wooed by other schools; a 15 percent increase in average pay, an explicit NU Foundation program for endowed chairpersons and wide-ranging faculty involvement in getting access to outside financial support.

As the AAUP cogently argues in its statement, other farm states, just as affected by the agriculture crisis, have supported state schools at levels that at least preserve, if not increase, quality.

Yet there is more than meets

the eye in the AAUP's press release: He who has ears, let him hear.

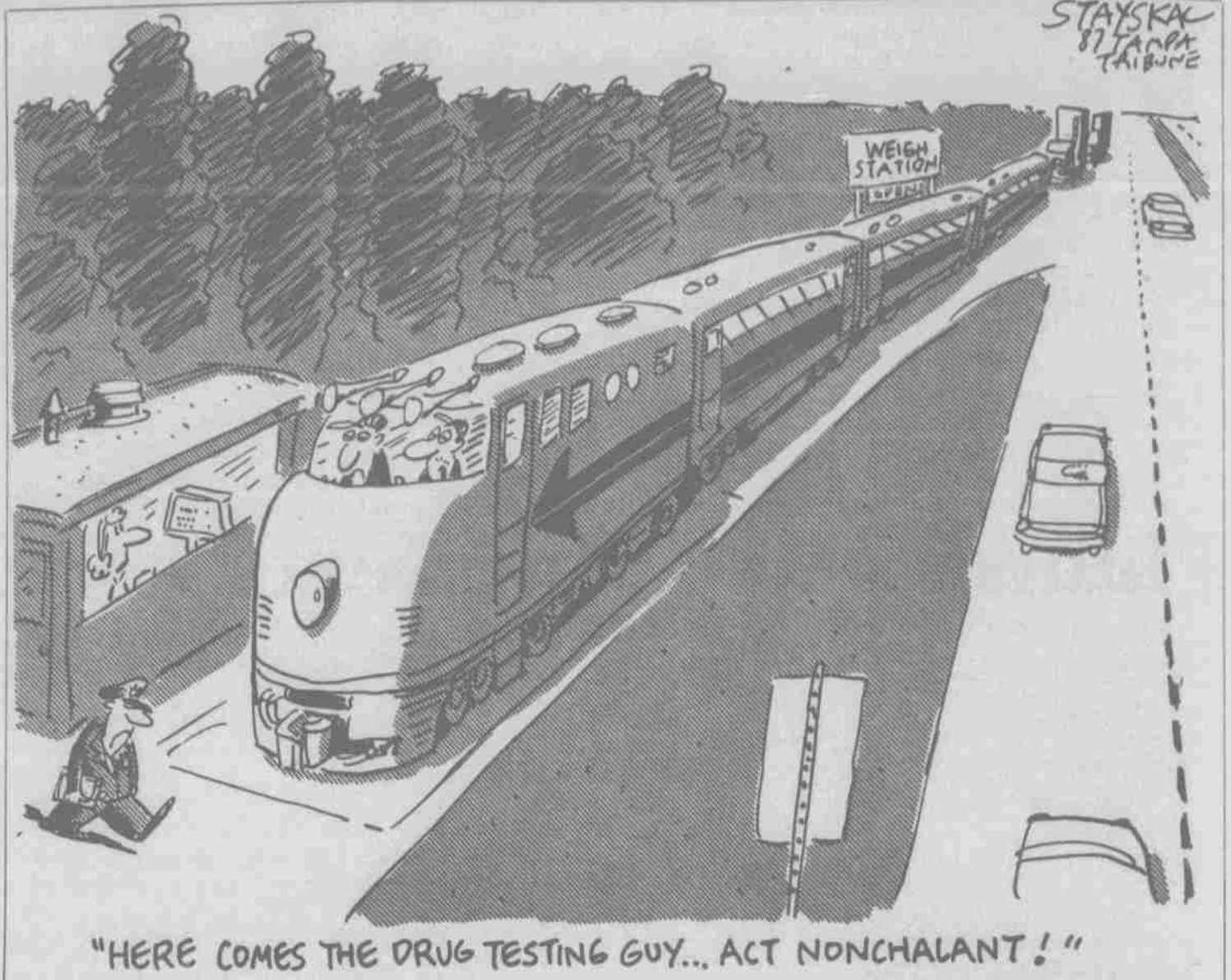
The AAUP termed its proposals "a rescue mission." While the release stressed the positive, an undercurrent of despair and a panic could be discerned by the sensitive observer. Certainly under current conditions, a little despair and panic is appropriate.

Perhaps, more than the proposals themselves, this tone — indicative of the obvious sentiment of many UNL faculty members — needs to be understood by the NU Foundation, the administration and, most of all, by the governor and unicameral.

The unstated tone of the press release is a plea, a cry of desperation by people who obviously love this school.

The flight from UNL is increasing geometrically. The superstructure of the school has been badly shaken, but can be repaired if decisive action is taken *now*.

Is anybody really listening?



God and man in their place Religious consciousness inevitable, but major faiths are not

I have many opinions. Some are so strong that I like to call them knowledge. I say, "I have an opinion about people: They should be free, just as I have an opinion about the color of my eyes: They are blue."

You also have opinions, and some so strong you think they must be something more. But they are, on the surface, words. Nothing more or less. Behind these opinions, but different from them, are the general beliefs that create these strings of words. Beliefs that are less simple and obvious, but which we refuse to give up. They exist, deep-seated within us. Any number of sayings seem able to take their place, but as these sentences rise and fall in discussion and experience, the beliefs go on. Too general to be intuitions, with too much substance to be an attitude, they are some kind of conviction.

With this kind of backdrop, I say, "I think this" and "I think that" and I even take a stab at why, sometimes, and say, "Look, I have proven it." But for all the other words and criticisms that then result, my beliefs live on. They always escape to find a new house, after the old house has been destroyed. At least some beliefs do — the important ones. Like a belief in "religion."

Religious belief is inescapable because no one can achieve certainty of the future, and no one can gain control of the nature of things. I think these may be essential to our religious belief, because if we were able to gain both of these, we would have no need for it.

Indeed, we would be gods. It's the way we mold our lives around the fact that we aren't such gods that make religion inescapable; the language of this basic religion uses words like "hope," "luck," "wish," "want," and "believe." These are ritual words to real life and natural fact. We could just plan and act. But instead we wish and dream for the utopian and for the admittedly impossible, and it's said to be only normal.

The object of religion is not fear. That future is not certain doesn't mean it will go wrong, far from it. That we don't control the nature of things is probably an advantage at this point. And we owe much to the eons-old natural stability. The biologist would point out our very existence through evolution. The physicist would explain that in our sun's history the physical constraints of the universe have not changed — the ultimate foundation of the universe remains.

One can seize on this as an explanation for our existence, just as one can the word "God." Where did God come from? How did matter and the physical

constants come about? These questions are on the same footing. When asking questions about the existence of everything, you can expect either to hear about something further or get no answer at all. Eventually you must come to an unanswerable question. Either of these questions could be that. Now, some may be inclined to think anything as sophisticated as the world couldn't have shaped itself, and they say "the Holy Father did it." But this is a god that not only conceives and creates every cubic centimeter of the universe, He's also a ruler, blessing, cursing, judging, taking vengeance and so on. And he plays a special role in human destiny, in accordance with the dictates of the cosmic war. So surely, this much more sophisticated thing that controls and creates the world is that much more unlikely to exist by itself than matter and force. This in itself proves nothing, but it does show how a way of speaking can go further than we wish.

Lee
Basham



Most of us aren't physicists. Where else can we put the word religion? Religion is a fact, but it's also a feeling, an experience. It's an emotional experience. I think the kind of experience associated with religion is one of awe and humbleness. To not be an elaborate conceit, it must be awe of something not caused by man and something independent of him.

The major world religions are Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. Each make man out to be something more than he seems. The first three declare man the image of God and the center of divine attention.

In Islam, Christianity and Judaism, God is a shadow caster, while we are the shadows he casts. When we exalt his form, we exalt our own. Buddhism puts man one step away from "god-head," where the next step in the succession of lives is becoming part of God himself.

In all these beliefs man is godlike beyond similarity, he is godlike in destiny. This is not an unseen consequence of doctrine, but its intent. Conceit is more direct, more focused in a maxim that holds for all these religions: "With humans, the majority is never right." Few ascend, few receive mercy or salvation, and the

chosen people are only one out of hundreds of nations and all races.

So much is problematic in these manlike religions; is there any alternatives? Perhaps we should believe in trees. This is no mockery. If you want to think of something truly beyond you, the uncut forest and the mountains beneath it are what you seek. Nature is a realm not caused by man and independent of him. It's not invulnerable to him; it requires more than awe and humbleness; it needs care.

Nature gives us our most religiously powerful metaphors. Consider the parables of Jesus. His best are descriptions of nature, like the tree or the tiny mustard seed. The facts of nature supply the wonder and the possibility.

The earth must be experienced. There must be life to wonder at, tunnels in the sand, roots in the soil, moss on the bark, nests in the branches and eyes in the dark. This is a doctrine I can live with. It doesn't offer me any great insights into my existence, but it doesn't give me any excuses for being cruel, either. It doesn't tell me who is evil and who is not, but tells me who isn't the center of the universe. And though it tells me some practices are wrong, condemning the perpetrators to incineration remains another idea. It gives me something that couldn't be wrong to believe, and I know it gives me feeling. And it gives me something honest to fight for.

Covenants are supernatural contracts which give man certain rights against God, and God certain rights against man. But nature is without all this. It is our unbought appreciation of nature that gives it a religious touch, not what nature will do for us as followers.

And nature, once lost, is wanted again. Today, I think, there is a growing appreciation for what was probably man's first approach to nature, religious approach without any intervening beliefs or suspicious importance for man. Here, to be a believer is simply to appreciate.

Basham is a senior political science major.

Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the fall 1988 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are Jeff Korbelik, editor; James Rogers, editorial page editor; Lise Olsen, associate news editor; Mike Reilly, night news editor and Joan Rezac, copy desk chief.

The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the regents.

Letters

Gestring applauds election coverage

I would like to commend the Daily Nebraskan editorial and news staff for their efforts during the past few weeks. Your coverage of the ASUN elections was detailed and unbiased this year, and your endorsement of Unite was an intelligent and well-written article. I realize that it is difficult to cover an election such as this, but you did an admirable job. In addition, your explanation and recommendations about the resolutions were precise and help-

ful to most students.

Also, I have been very pleased with the coverage you have given to the activities and meetings of the Interfraternity Council. Although all of our functions are obviously not newsworthy to all students on campus, I appreciate the coverage of the relevant and important IFC activities.

Rick Gestring
senior
agriculture

Campus, DN biased against homosexuals

Although Thursday's editorial in the Daily Nebraskan tried to explain giving almost half a page of coverage to a "joke" political party (NOFAG) by claiming the paper wanted "to provide accurate and equal coverage during the election," I found the space devoted to this article indicative of the warped values pervading this campus.

The paper provided no mention at all of photographer JEB's slide show, "Out of Bounds: A Lesbian Journey," pres-

ented the same day this article appeared. This show, part of Women's Week '87 and attended by over 100 people, spoke out against the violence and oppression visited on lesbian and gay people in the last 400 years, and provided a healthy, positive look at lesbian life.

I hope the DN will avoid such blatant bias in the future.

Barbara DiBernard
associate professor
English

DN shouldn't have run NOFAG article

The NOFAG party write-in campaign was not funny and was in very poor taste. I knew that. I bet the other 22,000 students who saw it knew that, too. But just in case we didn't know, Monday the DN poured forth for our edification blubbery editorials by Charles Lieurance and two campus ministers. What do you think the rest of us are? Do you think we don't know cretinism when we see it?

The DN press coverage last week and Monday served only to stroke the egos of NOFAG's creators and to bait an already harassed group of students. Imagine how deflating it would have been for NOFAG if nobody said anything at all, if the DN (and Lieurance and Doerr and Randall) simply ignored NOFAG, if NOFAG's gibberish was responded to with silence, and their antics met only long-suffering gazes from better people.

Morons like NOFAG make news, I suppose, because their swaggering display of their own deficiencies is shocking in the same way a self-immolation is.

Inevitably, the story stirred up a weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth from otherwise bright people. Lieurance, Doerr and Randall obligingly wrung their hands while the DN held the ceremonial washbasin.

DN's election-day story about NOFAG was obvious bullbaiting and shouldn't have been printed; Monday's editorial response was as irritating as a car with a stuck horn.

In this case of NOFAG's pathetic embarrassing clowning, I believe silence would have been the most deafening response.

Michelle Wiese
junior
undeclared