

Daily Nebraskan

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Financial aid

More and more students left out

The Daily Nebraskan series last week, "In The Red, Students in Debt," did not paint a pretty picture of college students here or anywhere. The three part series looked at the current problem, how students at UNL are being affected now and alternatives for students in the future. The answer, if there is one, is the alternatives.

In part one the DN reported that borrowing under federal programs totaled about \$9.8 million in 1985-86 compared to \$2 billion in 1975-76. During the same period federal spending for grants and scholarships dropped from about \$6.8 billion to \$4.8 billion. The increase in student debt led to the Reagan administration restructuring of national-aid programs.

The Reagan administration's proposed budget for fiscal year 1988 would drop more than one million students from the Pell Grant program and would limit eligibility to students with family incomes under \$20,000 a year. The College Work Study Program, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, National Direct Student Loans and State Student Incentive Grants would be eliminated under the proposed budget and the Guaranteed Student Loan Program would be reduced by more than half. Not a very encouraging report.

In part two, the DN found students struggling to maintain any type of educational existence. Many students work jobs on top of the federal aid they receive in loans and/or scholarships and grants. It's not cheap to go to school and anymore it appears that getting a higher education is becoming an expensive privilege. And it shouldn't be that way.

That leads us to part three of the series where the DN offered readers alternatives to federal programs and aid. Currently UNL offers a short term loan program for students who are finding themselves short in the pockets. The article also noted that UNL officials may look at a tuition payment plan. Some states are offering tax-exempt, bond-funded loan programs (not Nebraska).

On the federal level, one plan proposed by the Reagan Administration would eventually phase out National Direct Student Loans and replace them with income-contingent plans, a program that would leave a student with payments dragging on for years.

When all is said and done the outlook is not pretty. Students may find themselves sacrificing a chance at an education because of a lack of personal funds and they're finding less and less places to turn to. That's unfortunate.

Letters

Senator: leave rec-center issue behind

Last week the Nebraska Legislature overwhelmingly adopted LR69 authorizing the construction of a campus recreation/athletic facility at UNL. This proposal was quite controversial and created a very negative reaction from many faculty, students and staff. I interpreted the negative reaction to the project not so much as opposition to the project as it was opposition to the continuing budget cuts the university has had to endure of late. These budget cuts have resulted in very severe financial difficulties and the loss of many fine faculty.

Although the recreation project caused division on campus it served a very important function. It heightened awareness among legislators as to the financial difficulties UNL is facing. I have long recognized the trouble that our state was heading into by under-

funding our flagship university. However, some of my colleagues are not as close to the campus and are simply not aware of the negative impact these cuts are having on the quality of education at UNL.

Thus the opponents of the rec facility may feel as though they have lost this battle, but in fact they may have helped greatly to win the war against unfunding UNL. I would strongly encourage all UNL students, faculty and staff to join together and put the rec facility issue behind us. We must refocus on the budget needs of UNL and continue to contact senators and the governor about the current budget problems and the bright future of UNL if funding was provided.

Sen. Don Wesely
Lincoln

Unite submits apology for overspending

The Electoral Commission has determined that the Unite Student Election Group exceeded its spending limit in its campaign for ASUN. The executives and treasurer of Unite extend an apology to the students of UNL for its violation of Electoral Commission rules.

Although our mistakes were unintentional and by no means guided by deceit or malice, we make no excuses and do not hesitate in our apology. Our mistakes were honest and in no way reflect upon our campaign in whole or the people involved in the Unite Student Election Group. From its beginning, Unite ran a clean and honest campaign.

While we hold that our alleged overspending was not preconceived, we do not disclaim responsibility. We have learned from our errors, and we pledge

to educate others so that similar problems do not occur again.

Unite promised throughout its campaign to seek to improve and maintain quality education and life for the students of UNL. With our experiences, both good and bad, in the back of our minds, we look forward to, and shall move ahead in our commitment, to the betterment of UNL. We hope the bridge between ASUN and the students remains strong, accessible and growing. At the same time that we apologize, we begin our pursuit of the goals we have set and of the improvement of education and student life at UNL.

Andy Pollock, president-elect
Shawn Boldt, first vice president-elect
John Bergmeyer, second vice president-elect
Courtney Prieb, Unite treasurer

Editorial

Education needs humanism

Attackers seek to force pet religions down citizens' throats

The basic argument: ● There is such a thing as a humanist manifesto, the principles of which are believed in an absolute, religious fashion by some.

● There are statements in public-school texts which parallel those in the manifesto. These statements are not established scientific fact, and so forth. They are statements of faith. Therefore, these statements represent the establishment of a state religion through the public-school texts they appear in.

The first premise is based on the idea that principles must be, at one time or another, sincerely believed in a religious way in order to be religious beliefs. Potential religions are not the object of the establishment clause. Law types may refer to United States v. Seeger on this point.

If we change the wording of the first premise of this argument to "Bible," where it says "humanist manifesto," the argument's error is exposed, because the textbook supporter will immediately ask of the second premise, "What sort of statements? Statements that can be taken as secular, or only as religious?"

Not 'spiritual'
The fact that the statements appear in the Bible is hardly what makes them religious, only those referring to a supreme being, the miraculous, etc., must qualify as religious beliefs in themselves. The Supreme Court made this clear in Stone v. Graham where a Kentucky law requiring the posting of a copy of the Ten Commandments in each public-school classroom was declared unconstitutional. Even though the Ten Commandments address secular matters, the court found that "the first part of the Ten Commandments concerned religious duties of believers." The court put its finger on it here. Why were the other commandments not "religious duties"? Because they were not spiritual in nature, even though Christians and Jews treat them as religious duties. This insightful Supreme Court decision undermines Alabama's attempts to censor for the benefit of the religiously insecure and fanatic.

The tenets of the humanistic manifesto are only treated as religious by some. But they are secular in fact, not spiritual. The manifesto itself couldn't be taught because its denial of the very possibility of the spiritual violates the free exercise of religion. But its common-sense ideas clearly can be. A philosophy of civic responsibility and of a citizen's free choice of moral values within the law is no religion, and contradicts no serious one.

The fact that someone organizes a set of beliefs into a religion does not make them religious beliefs, except for that person. To stand as religious beliefs by themselves, they must be spiritual beliefs. Why is this? Spiritual beliefs reflect a personality and power outside of the human believer. They're essentially religious in nature whether or not anyone believes them, while philosophies only become religious for their ardent believers.

It's the endorsement of spiritual belief the establishment clause addresses, beliefs that are necessarily religious. Not beliefs that have no religious necessity; those which parallel the tenets of secular humanism. It takes a far journey in reasoning and experience for these to become religious beliefs. But on the face of it, "God the Spirit, the Father and the Son" are always religious. God is spiritual; what is not spiritual isn't God. God is necessarily a subject of religion, though not only religion.

Some have tried to confuse the free exercise of religion, where beliefs are treated as religious by their believers, such as an opposition to war-time service in the army, with the issue of establishment of a state religion.

No establishment

The First Amendment of 1791 states the distinction explicitly, and the case cited, *Torcaso v. Watkins*, addresses free exercise and is irrelevant to the

establishment of beliefs which are not necessarily religious. The only establishment doctrine violations hinted at in *Torcaso* involved the Maryland law requiring officeholders to swear to a belief in "God," any god. This is a situation of spiritual belief, not treatment of belief. Free exercise is violated when Buddhists, etc., are elected, and the majority acted on these grounds.

It may come as little surprise, but in the natural setting neutral education needs, if any values may be detected or inferred, they are at least that the administrators, teachers and most of the students are not "natively depraved." Nor are they unable to find happiness and satisfaction in life with their own good judgment and experience.

Lee Basham



In public schools today, we are unlikely to find the faculty milling about, lamenting that earthly life is essentially futile and urging their students to think the same. It would be insane for teachers not to uphold the opposite of this, but to some all this sanity is evidence that secular humanism is afoot. We're told that such a state of affairs constitutes a secular religion. Perhaps the establishment clause prohibits sanity and personal encouragement in our public schools.

Neutrality necessary

The teaching forum is a kind of public forum. The teaching forum must remain within the natural world because that's the only thing every sane citizen can agree exists. Neutrality is unanimity in a democracy, and on this point we are unanimous; there is a natural world with natural laws.

The public schools offer an understanding of the natural world. They do not properly deny that any spiritual elements exist, but uphold the fact that in the natural world, these are not observed. What the teaching forum of our public schools represents is neutral; it only sets out the facts of the natural world. Only through great leaps of reasoning, to vague and ambiguous conclusions, can the natural world be said to contain spiritual elements. And it is very important to recognize the violations of the neutral teaching forum of the natural world (the one world no one will deny) that occurs when extremely problematic spiritual beliefs interjected into it. When the founders of our constitution referred to religion they clearly had no reason to believe this world had a larger meaning than spiritual beliefs. And in the context of the constitution it would be bizarre to believe it could mean anything more. Beliefs that are simply based on faith and held religiously by some for various reasons include democracy; faith in the decisions of the people; compassion; faith in the values of people; optimism; faith in the good of the world and its people; achievement; faith in the value of the untapped; creativity; faith in the value of the new and unexperienced. Texts that restrain themselves to these values are what we need in the public schools.

Human confidence OK

All these values are matters of human faith and exist without a single spiritual belief. They can each exist solely in

the natural world. But these are the values that must be considered religious and not be allowed to form the basis of our public education, if the religion of "secular humanism" is to be avoided. It's abhorrent to some that humans might attain a confidence in themselves and their creativity at the expense of being wretched sinners. We're told that despising oneself is so very important in "a proper relation to the sin-free creator."

Nowhere is it taught that a creator does not exist; nowhere is it taught that immortality is a superstition. Nowhere is it taught that man is only his life here. But in offering a picture of the beliefs of some people, it is claimed that these are the things that are indeed being taught, or at least suggested. But this is absurd. And so is the book banning that has accompanied this less-than-enlightened thought. As a people, we have a powerful interest in keeping at least our public schools free of moral escapism. We must teach some skeleton democratic values, even with people screaming, "Religion! Religion!" in our faces. And they will scream — whenever these values do not somehow fit the specifics of the pet religion they have chosen for their children.

Naturally, the issue that some texts fail to give a proper account of the fact that many of our forefathers were intolerant, witch-burning fanatics is different from the constitutional one. Nor does there seem to be a humanist tenet about fantasizing that the Protestant churches don't exist. I believe that the facts should not be ignored by our school texts out of some kind of misguided patriotism, but should be revealed in their full light. Therefore I object to texts which either ignore or idealize this aspect of our religious past.

Dewey responsible

I think the historical explanation of how this unfortunate case came about begins with John Dewey. Dewey was the foremost authority and theorist on education during the first half of this century, writing some of the most influential works, especially "Education in Democracy." Dewey worked in the natural realm of our teaching forum and wrote his books with this forum in mind. He came to take the values the teaching forum allowed very seriously and combined them with a denial of divinity.

As a central figure in the humanist manifesto of 1933, he helped create a religion that was founded on the natural values that the teaching forum offers and the establishment clause clearly allows: optimism, compassion, cooperation, tolerance of personal choices and a willingness to allow children choice in forming their opinions. Combine these with a flat-out denial of the whole realm of spiritual possibilities and you do have an offense against the free exercise of religion, but only if you make this combination in the public schools.

Let's get our fingernails into the truth here. Why do the "secularists" want to offer some kind of attitude of unthreatened choices to our children? Simple. Because they (or is it just we?) have faith in humans, and in human minds that have a faith in democracy, compassion, optimism, achievement and creativity. Here's a manifesto for the keepers of the angry Jehovah to choke on.

Basham is a senior political science major.

Letter Policy

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