

Daily Nebraskan

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Quips and quotes Washington blasts NOFAG

Just when you think an "issue" is dead another college newspaper stumbles upon it and is compelled to comment editorially. At least The Daily, the student newspaper at the University of Washington, did when they came across the Daily Nebraskan article concerning the announcement of the "NOFAG" party for ASUN elections. We exchange papers with several other universities.

Basically, the Daily condemned the three candidates and chastised the DN for running the article. Apparently The Daily missed our editorial the following day and Charles Lieurance's column the following Monday.

When all is said and done it's nice to know that students from other universities are reading our papers. We just wish they would read them more thoroughly.

● The DN reported last Wednesday that a survey of 350 students showed a lack of awareness among students on what services the unions provide on East and City campuses. The survey was presented to Union Board. The results are alarming. It's unfortunate because the unions have a lot to offer if only

students would take the time to investigate.

● Tax Freedom Day is May 4. That's the day the Tax Foundation predicted that the typical American will have to work to pay up for 1987. The Associated Press reported that economists at the non-partisan research organization calculate that if every cent a worker earned during the first part of the year were earmarked for federal, state and local taxes, he or she would have to work an extra 19 days after the 1986 taxes were due. An average person will have to work two hours and 43 minutes of each eight-hour day to pay taxes. That's kind of like working part time for the federal and state governments.

● Sen. Jerome Warner did the correct thing when he sponsored an amendment to the 65-mph speed limit bill. The amendment eliminated the 5-mph cushion that would have prevented an assessment of points on the driving records of people exceeding 65 mph by less than 5 mph. Warner said the cushion would encourage people to travel faster, making the interstate more dangerous. He's absolutely right.



Letters

Reader: Men not to blame for sexism

In response to Jayne Stratton's letter (DN, April 22) I would like to say that not only was it philosophically offensive, it was also contradictory and illogical. Stratton seems to have missed the point of James N. Hanna's letter.

In the first paragraph of her letter she states that males are the source of sexism. While this may seem obvious to some, let's examine its basis. Some males hold sexist attitudes, this is true; but some females also hold these very same values. These views are ingrained in children starting at birth by their parents and by the society around them. As Stratton admits, today's men did not create our present patriarchal society; and though some may perpetuate it, not all do. People cannot be declared guilty by association, for that is the basis for all bigotry: judging somebody by a group.

As for sexist language, usage is changing, but changing the language takes time. Many people use phrases

like "going out with the girls/boys" to refer to a group of adults. That is a symptom of not wanting to grow up, not sexism.

In the final two paragraphs of the letter, Stratton's credibility is greatly diminished. Stratton proceeds to make sexist comments about men by assuming that all they think about is sports and sex, thus committing the very sin she is condemning. She then degenerates to personal attacks on Hanna by referring to him as "superficial," a whining child and "a rude, sexist idiot." She finally blames males as the sole perpetrators of lower women's wages and sexist advertising.

If Stratton would show more willingness to work with men, instead of against them, she would find many willing to join her in her worthy fight against sexism.

Samuel W. Schimek
senior
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Editorial

Book-banning not the issue

Public schools' overcommitment to openness silences virtue

An Open Letter to Lincoln Public School Superintendent Philip Schoo:

Your recent discussion of censorship and the schools has caused a modest amount of reflection on my part. On one level, there's no question that I agree with you and frown upon attempts by some parents of LPS students to force the withdrawal of disputed literature from the schools. Such individuals seem to maintain a rather parochial attitude to what constitutes worthwhile literature, and they certainly don't understand the broader context of what such a precedent would do to the Lincoln public schools.

Nonetheless, I'm not sure that such attempts to withdraw books from schools are not a manifestation of a deeper and, as yet, a more inchoate concern. That is to say, I'm not sure that the fundamental issue with such parents is over the propriety of censorship in the public schools. It could be the case that these parents sense a real problem in the schools, but have sadly grasped upon an illegitimate and objectionable mode in which to communicate their concerns. Let me see if I can explain.

All societies have an end-in-view for state action: they have a vision of the virtuous individual and seek to structure their society to conform with that vision. One method of promoting such norms is through state-run schools. There have been many visions in many societies — many visions even in the short history of the United States. I think that University of Chicago philosopher Allan Bloom hit the nail on the head in a National Public Radio speech given several years ago which evidently was the basis for his recently released book, "The Closing of the American Mind." Bloom argued that the primary virtue that dominant education philosophies seek to inculcate is openness.

In itself, such a commitment is obviously non-objectable: After all, many respected visions of the virtuous man include an element of tolerance. But Bloom argues that the current commitment to "openness" extends much further than the past inclusions

of tolerance. The modern understanding has extended so far that it has, in effect, resulted in the closing of the American mind. The reason, as the title of his NPR speech suggests, is that at root it expresses an "easy-going nihilism."

How did this come about? A commitment to openness as the virtue to be exalted above all others destroys the basis for learned argument and discussion. If some proponent of a view is continually hushed from advocacy by the admonition that in his "single-minded" commitment to truth he is intolerant (the worst insult under this regime), the natural reaction is simply to remain silent. Mill's justification of free speech is that through the cacophony of reasoned dissent,

Jim Rogers

truth will emerge. But this presupposes a group of individuals committed to their vision of the truth to such an extent that they bother to attempt persuasion. The presupposition of the dominant view of tolerance, as Bloom argues much better than I, is nihilism. No culture is superior, none inferior. Given this, what does Plato have to teach? Given this, why persuade? Why try to induce others by argument away from a world view as admittedly "valid" as one's own?

The next obvious question is this: If schools are not primarily committed to imbuing their students with an openness resulting in the silence of infinite tolerance, what virtues should they be engaged in imbuing? Whose virtue? Who gets to decide? I'm completely willing to grant the force of this question. Yet the question of "whose virtue" can be easily turned. For example, why yours, now? (I'm personifying you as the expression of Lincoln's educational establishment.) Of all the educational visions of the virtuous citizen (from fundamentalist to Marxist), why is the status quo's vision so right?

I'm also willing to grant the argument that public schools cannot polit-

ically or logically cater to each parent's vision of what the good is for his child. The Lincoln School Board can grant book-banning requests in this case without risking a torrent of such requests from all other "interest groups." Yet if it is impossible for the public schools to imbue their students with any vision of substantive virtue, perhaps it is time to adopt an educational structure that will permit it. The most obvious alternative to the status quo is a voucher system of paying for education.

Voucher opponents are fond of terming voucher advocates as beholden to insular, sectarian interests. But given Bloom's paradigm, this argument can no longer wash. The current educational system silences due to its commitment to infinite "openness." In contrast, by fomenting communities that are vibrantly committed to visions of the truth, the good and the beautiful, a chorus of social discussion will arise that is the only sure indication of a society that treats important questions as they deserve to be treated.

The time is now gone where the de facto Protestant consensus can be thought to undergird public school systems. America today is more diverse than it has ever been in the past. The modern public school cannot address this diversity in a socially helpful fashion. But why should we expect it to since it was developed specifically with an insular population in mind?

Majoritarian control of the educational process is no longer a viable alternative for America today. We can have a society committed to tolerance and virtue, but only with an educational system that recognized that both must exist together. And only a voucher system can do that.

Superintendent Schoo, please don't rest content with simply sighting the easy targets of parents embracing censorship in your policy guns. Their approach is wrong and their perspective naive, but that doesn't mean all is well and good in the government school.

Rogers is an economics graduate, law student and Daily Nebraskan editorial page editor.

National spy hysteria a symptom of the 'Cuban-brigade syndrome'

Remember the Soviet brigade in Cuba? In the summer of 1979, President Carter submitted the SALT II treaty to the Senate for ratification. At which point Sen. Frank Church, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, discovered a Soviet brigade in Cuba. To meet the "crisis," SALT II hearings were postponed. The president was put on the defensive, the atmosphere was poisoned, the treaty was delayed and then sunk by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Then it turned out that the brigade had been there for 16 years. It was the non-issue of the decade. But it did its damage.

Every decade has its bogus Cuban brigade. Now we have ours: the embassy spy hysteria.

The greatest deliberative body in the world is again in an arms-control mood, pushing for treaties — test ban, SDI, even a revived SALT II — from a weakened president. So, a weakened president, desperate to shore himself up politically and within sight of a Euromissile treaty, prepares to dispatch his secretary of state to Moscow for crucial arms-control talks. And what happens? The Senate discovers that the Soviets have been spying on our embassy in Moscow and that our new embassy there is riddled with bugs. Shocked, it passes a resolution urging Secretary Shultz to stay home rather than negotiate with such cheaters.

The Soviets called the American reaction to the embassy story "spy hysteria." The Kremlin is not often right. This case is an exception. Hysteria it is. There is absolutely nothing new here. The Soviets have been building their hill-top, spy-nest Washington embassy

for 10 years. Anyone who drives by can see the forest of antennas atop the buildings from which the Soviets can listen in on any conversation they please.

We have long known that our new Moscow embassy was bugged right down to the concrete foundation. Sen. Moynihan, for one, has been complaining about the embassy problems for years. Every administration since Nixon has ignored it. What happens? A couple of Marine guards in Moscow betray their country and let in the Soviets in exchange for the favors of a KGB Mata Hari, and Washington goes bonkers.



Charles Krauthammer

"Sordid tricks," an "affront," an "assault on U.S. embassy security," complained the Wall Street Journal. A "rape of our national privacy," gasped William Safire. This country is "damned upset," claimed Secretary of State Shultz. The Soviets have trespassed "beyond the bounds of reason," agreed the president of the United States. And my favorite: Evans and Novak bravely called for "a full-scale exposure of Soviet (spy) practices whatever the impact on arms control." Since they generally view arms control as an infection in need of a vaccine, they win the 1987 Brer Rabbit "Please please please don't fling me in dat briar patch")

Award.

"The Soviets," complained Lawrence Eagleburger, "just go too far." Really? The FBI tried to tunnel into the basement of the Soviet consulate in San Francisco in the early '70s. I wish they had made it. If FBI counter-intelligence is not trying to seduce, blackmail and "turn" Soviet agents in this country, it should have its appropriations rescinded. Espionage does not play by Miss Manners.

Yet Washington has reacted as if the Soviets had, say, taken over a small Central American country. (Bad example: Washington is fairly calm about that prospect. Say, as if the Soviets had cheated at Olympic hockey.) The Senate, joined by a bevy of columnists, urges Secretary Shultz not to go to Moscow for arms-control talks. Why? Because the embassy is not secure? But it has never been secure. To register a protest against Soviet "penetration" of our embassy (an unfortunate metaphor, given the circumstances)?

To his credit, Shultz went to Moscow and made considerable progress. The hysteria will now shortly blow itself out. What will remain are questions not about American security but about American seriousness. If Congress pretends to making high national policy on things like arms control, it had better stop these absurd about-faces. Just when negotiations are heating up, to suggest boycotting talks over an issue that would be utterly peripheral if it were not phony is a demonstration of high unseriousness.

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