

Editorial

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Reagan uncharitable

Gifts to poor must be counted as income

Twice recently the Reagan administration has shown its lack of concern for the less-fortunate members of the nation it is supposed to govern.

Many elderly, blind and disabled people who receive help from charitable organizations will get smaller welfare checks because of a new Reagan administration policy.

Welfare recipients now must count free food, shelter, firewood and clothing as income. The policy, which was not publicly announced, took effect Oct. 1, the New York Times reported.

"For every bag of groceries we give these poor people, the government will reduce their benefit checks," Sharon M. Daly of the U.S. Catholic Conference told The Associated Press. "The more we help these people through local parish programs, the poorer they will be."

Charitable organizations

such as those set up through churches have meant to supplement the meager incomes of welfare recipients. Now those programs will work against the people they aim to help.

Also, the Reagan administration has opposed a congressional proposal to pay for Medicare recipients' major prescription drug costs. Under the proposal, part of a catastrophic health care bill, Medicare would pay 80 percent of elderly and disabled patients' drug bills after a \$700 annual deductible, AP reported. Medicare now covers at-home drug costs only for organ transplant patients.

Meanwhile, the administration has requested \$270 million for the Contras in Nicaragua.

Reagan's administration is reluctant to help poor folks at home, but it is all too willing — overeager, even — to shell out money for "peace-seeking" rebels at war in a foreign country.

DN urges Massengale to lift silence on office

The Daily Nebraskan applauds University of Nebraska-Lincoln Chancellor Martin Massengale for saying that officials in the UNL Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid are free to talk with the media.

However, Massengale wasn't clear on whether he removed a restriction requiring Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs James Griesen be present when anyone in the office spoke to reporters. Griesen made the request early this week.

Massengale encouraged the media to interview "management" rather than regular staff in order to give workers more time to help students. However, a DN reporter who attempted to interview William McFarland, director of financial aid, on Monday, was told that Griesen had to be present.

Placing a restriction of any kind on a person's freedom of speech is a direct violation of the First Amendment, no matter what the circumstances.

There's more to this mess than just dealing with the media. It's a saga of misinformation between the administration and one of its main offices on campus. A recent accreditation report revealed that UNL's central administration suffered from communication problems — and this case is a classic example.

The administration has drawn heat through a student-circulated petition requesting improvements in the office. About 1,000 students signed the petition.

In the wake of the petition, several members of the media

have interviewed students, administrators and financial aid office workers to keep readers posted on what's going on.

Massengale has said Griesen needs to be present during interviews to provide more information. That's hogwash. Reporters are intelligent enough to get both sides of the story. They don't need an administrator to make sure they do.

A good example of responsible reporting of the financial aid office problems ran in the DN last week. Reporter Lee Rood interviewed Larry Apel, assistant director of the financial aid office, and then talked to Griesen. She didn't interview them at the same time, and their comments contradicted each other.

Griesen said the administration has done everything it can to appropriate extra funds and search for additional space for the office.

However, Apel said the administration hasn't done enough.

"We've pushed for changes for years and years and years," Apel said, "and we've watched other people get improvements, while we stay the way we are. I feel like we're the plague."

The story was objective reporting. Both sources had an equal chance to present their perspective of the situation without interruption by another party. In short, the story was reported fairly.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White has said, "It is the purpose of the First Amendment to preserve an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail."

And UNL needs to keep that communication flowing freely.

Welcome to the new Borscht

Columnist: 'Commies who don't act like 'commies' main U.S. threat

Many years ago there was a best-selling book called "You Can Trust the Communists—To Be Communists." The idea behind this seemingly redundant title was that the commies might be a treacherous, cowardly, bloodthirsty lot, but they were also so thoroughly politically conditioned that their actions were easily predictable to the informed observer.

For years the right-wingers have taken comfort in this belief. "Yeah, them commies are tricky, but we know what they're really up to."

But now the Soviet Union is being run by Mikhail Gorbachev.

All bets are off. It's no wonder Gorbachev scares conservatives. Since he took office, he has:

- moved to shift the arms race into reverse;
- allowed more dissidence and debate in the arts and media than the Soviet Union has seen before;
- eased the pressure on organized religion.

The man simply refuses to act like a commie.

"It's a trick," the panicking hawks cry. "It must be a trick."

If it's a trick, then it's a mighty good one. A big part of Gorbachev's doctrine of glasnost (openness) is to allow the foreign press more access to the common Soviet people. As far as hard-nosed, suspicious Western journalists can tell, and as far as the even more suspicious Soviet people can tell, Gorbachev is making genuine, wide-sweeping changes in Soviet society.

I am scared of Gorbachev, but I don't think he's pulling any sort of con job on the Soviet people or the leaders of the "free world." I think Gorbachev is a brilliant and honorable man. And that makes him much more dangerous than a con artist.

The term "honorable politician" has, at best, a very limited definition. Since the art of world politics consists mostly of lying, cheating, stealing and killing, an honorable politician is simply a politician who only lies, cheats, steals and murders for the benefit of the state, rather than for

personal gain or in pursuit of ideological fancies.

Honorable politicians can only be called statesmen when they have Gorbachev's genius for negotiation and his almost uncanny ability to introduce radical reforms that strengthen, not weaken, his power base. And statesmen make dangerous enemies.

The United States used to have statesmen at the helm. Roosevelt and Kennedy were the last real statesman-presidents. But now we have Ronald Reagan, with his knee-jerk aggression and his party-line platitudes instead of policy. Next year Reagan will be replaced by any one of a number of weak-willed, faceless party ciphers.

Gorbachev, a young man by the standards of world leaders, could remain in power for another 10, 20, 30 years, and who would stand against him?

Chris McCubbin



I don't know whether Gorbachev wants to take over the world. I doubt that he does. But he's certainly interested in seeing that the United States is not an obstacle to the growth of Soviet political, ideological and economic influence.

What are we to do? If we oppose Gorbachev actively, he's smart enough to outmaneuver us and make a fuss that will completely obliterate whatever ragged shreds of international credibility the United States has left after the Reagan years.

If we take a conciliatory attitude, make friends with the Soviets, then soon Gorbachev will be leading us by the nose. The non-violent Soviet takeover from "Amerika" that seemed so absurd a year ago now begins to look like an ominous prophecy.

We'll probably do what we've been doing — dither, protest and vacillate while step by step the Soviets

gain ascendancy on the world scene.

Of course, these days it's hard to tell whether things would really be worse under the Soviets. Sure, they're still in Afghanistan, but we're still in Honduras. They still won't let the Jews out, but we won't let the Mexicans in. There you can't invite a friend to church, but here you can't mention religion in a high-school textbook.

But I do love my country, and I don't want to leave it. I've grown up reaping the benefits that go with being a citizen of the most prosperous, powerful country in the world, and I don't want to lose them.

And I still sincerely believe that our peculiar form of chaotic capitalism is a more just, efficient and enduring government than any form of Marxism that could possibly survive in the real world.

But it's not simply a battle of ideology. It's a battle of will. And right now will is in short supply in the U.S. government.

When Mathias Rust landed a small airplane in Red Square, the Soviet armed forces lost face. But Gorbachev seized on the opportunity to purge the military of deadwood and strengthened his power base immensely.

When it was discovered that U.S. military personnel were selling arms to the nation's enemies to fund a secret, illegal foreign policy, the U.S. armed forces lost face. Reagan denied everything, played dumb, covered his rear and flushed his credibility in the eyes of the American people.

See the difference? The Russians have Gorbachev and will for many more years. We have our forgetful, cancerous, geriatric warmonger, who next year will be replaced by some indistinguishable party monkey.

The Russians have a real leader. We have none, and none in sight.

Big changes are in the air, and you should prepare for them. Buy a can of Campbell's borscht just so you can get used to the taste. Picture an onion dome on the Capitol. Next time you see Gorbachev on the tube, hum a few bars of "Hail to the Chief" and see how it sounds on him.

And God help us all. McCubbin is a senior English and philosophy major.

Sennett's science knowledge 'shallow'

In his piece, "Science vs. Creation" (Daily Nebraskan, Oct. 15), James Sennett goes far in instructing the student of journalism how not to write a cogent editorial.

Sennett would have done much better to have merely stated something to the effect that the views of creationists are being unfairly and nonconstructively dismissed by today's mainstream scientific community — and left it at that.

Letter

Unfortunately, either because his grasp of the issue is embarrassingly weak and must therefore be cloaked or because his only real intention was to cast more fuel on the fire, he proceeds to bury the essential gist of his editorial beneath several paragraphs of trite and meaningless blather.

He states that "Creation science is just that — a science." This assertion lies at the very heart of the creationist-evolutionist debate, but if you read Sennett's article closely, you will note that he is careful not to step into that ring. Rather, he attempts to distract us from the glass jaw of his shallow understanding of scientific matters by dancing in taunting circles around the periphery of the issue. He does not dare to step in and deliver a blow in defense of the creationists' claim to "science" because he is afraid of the laughter that will erupt when his shorts fall down.

At one point near the middle of his commentary, Sennett vaguely wanders into "a general theory known as catastrophism" only to emerge with the inane conclusion that the now famous meteor-dinosaur extinction theory, because it involves the hypothesis of a naturally occurring cataclysm, somehow abrogates a wide range of universally accepted ("uniformitarian") scientific theories such as plate tectonics, natural selection, glacial advance and retreat, star formation, etc. Frankly, James, I think you're a wee bit out of your element here.

Now, I can excuse Sennett's youthful ignorance of scientific theory and history if I must, but I cannot swallow the carping and self-damning statement he makes toward the latter third of his piece: "The arguments of the creationists, if not air-tight, are at least worthy of response from the general scientific community. But all that has been forthcoming is derision, innuendo and character assassination."

Hmmm. If I were Sherlock Holmes, I would postulate that Sennett conceived this bold and tearful statement between the hours of 5 and 6 p.m. and that he furthermore was

comfortably plopped in front of the TV listening to President Reagan berate the Congress for its unwillingness to accept his nomination of Judge Bork to the Supreme Court. Character assassination? Innuendo? By the way, James, what is all of this innuendo

business? Is there some sleeping around, some sort of carnal tom-foolery going on in creationist circles we should know about?

Sennett had several pointed, but essentially empty, cavalier remarks: "Defenders of what Albert Einstein called 'the religion of science' have come out of the Bunsen burners to defend the autonomy of their sacred cow" (no derision there, huh, James?), "the antiseptic veneer of contemporary science" (so nice to see an absence of "name-calling" here), or how about "the sterile ivory-tower pontifications of the evolutionary scientists."

I don't know. Maybe I watch too many movies, but when I think of an archeologist or a paleontologist, I picture this guy in dirty jeans with clay under his fingernails and limestone dust in his hair. It does not occur to me to wonder which religion he or she might or might not be affiliated with.

Sennett points out (and convincingly demonstrates) that "Human beings always react most violently when their most treasured beliefs and dogmas are threatened." To this I agree wholeheartedly. I would also point out, however, that human beings can also be counted on to react most violently to the fears that have grown out of their own ignorance.

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