

Daily Nebraskan University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Mike Reilly, Editor, 472-1766
Diana Johnson, Editorial Page Editor
Jen Deselms, Managing Editor
Curt Wagner, Associate News Editor
Chris Anderson, Associate News Editor
Joan Rezac, Copy Desk Chief
Joel Carlson, Columnist

Nation lacks nurses

Legislature could lower RN deficit

Nebraska's Legislature could have taken the first step this year to eventually reverse a dangerous nursing shortage in the state, a job the medical community should be undertaking.

Unfortunately, the Health and Human Services Committee did not advance LB1185, the Nursing Student Assistance Act, out of committee earlier this session, but it would do well to reintroduce and pass it next session.

Sen. Arlene Nelson of Grand Island, who introduced LB1185, said the bill would alleviate a projected shortage of at least 7,800 nurses in Nebraska by 1990.

Southeast Nebraska and the Panhandle are critical shortage areas.

These shortages are not native to Nebraska, according to a special report in the March 14 issue of Time magazine.

The Time article states that growing numbers of the United States' 2 million registered nurses are leaving the field.

Time also states that, since 1983, enrollment in nursing schools has dropped 20 percent to less than 200,000 students.

The shortages, health-care professionals say, result from less-than-honorable treatment of nurses by the medical community.

Most registered nurses earn \$21,000 their first year, and 30-year veterans earn less than \$30,000.

Because they are understaffed, hospitals routinely require 50- and 60-hour work weeks for nurses, sometimes working them to the point of exhaustion.

These factors and others create a potentially dangerous situation in many of the nation's hospitals. Some medical professionals say understaffing and other problems often com-

promise patient care.

The medical community also must change the role of registered nurses.

According to Time, a registered nurse's duties range from starting intravenous drug lines and bathing patients to answering telephones and taking out the garbage.

Secretaries should be hired to do paperwork and answer phones, and medical technicians can administer medication after a nurse's approval of the dosages.

The medical community can't rely on nursing schools to recruit more young nurses, but must make the nursing profession more attractive to young nurses.

Also, the medical community must attract more nurses through higher salaries and retain veteran nurses with incentives such as raises.

Here's where the medical community can follow the Legislature's lead, if the unicameral decides to take the initiative.

Under LB1185, the state would defer repayment and interest of loans if a nursing student becomes a registered nurse and works in a Nebraska area short of nurses after graduation.

In order to qualify for the proposed nursing student assistance in Nebraska, a student would have to work one year in a shortage area for each year the money is borrowed.

The state would loan up to \$3,000 a year at 5 percent interest, up to a maximum of \$12,000.

If the Legislature passes this bill, it could ignite the medical community to enact much-needed reforms and solve shortage problems.

Maybe then nurses, enough nurses, can get back to saving peoples' lives.



The 1980s are officially over

Being lost in yesteryear is one fad that should definitely pass

Although 21 months must pass before we're in the 1990s, the 1980s are basically over.

For the first time in ages, a decade has been tossed into a lame-duck period, a transitory state, whatever you want to call it. Unless something significant and original arises soon, we may as well forget the next year and a half and prepare for the '90s.

Last year, I complained about the "retro" trend — the resurgence of 1960s music and 1950s values. But that's all I thought it was — a trend.

But the "retro" trend has become much more than a passing, ephemeral fad. In the 1970s, the resurgence of '50s culture was harmless and cute, albeit annoying. The same could have been said about '60s revivalism in the '80s, but as we glorify remakes of old songs and don't-dye clothes, we forget something: It's impossible to raise the dead.

The last three or four years of a decade are supposed to be the apex of a culture's identity, but instead we walk around in a catatonic state, lost in yesteryear. One would have thought that by 1988, retroactivity would have passed and, finally, something new would've come along. But the past continues to obsess us.

Just look at last summer's 20th anniversary of San Francisco's "Summer of Love." The media bombarded the public with reminiscent nostalgia about how glorious it was back in Haight-Ashbury in 1967. As people re-enacted "love-ins," meditated in Golden Gate Park for the press and worshiped the release of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," did anyone take the time to enrich the summer of 1987? People seemed to be more concerned about how summer was 20 years ago than how summer could be in the present.

Retroactivity is dominating more than pop culture, as the letters on the Daily Nebraskan editorial page can attest. Why has it taken us so long to debate the evils of racism and homophobia? Have we suddenly discovered civil rights? Or did Reagan's reign erase any social progress we made, forcing us to relive human rights activism as his influence wanes?

Perhaps if we'd really imitated the '60s, we would have stood up for civil rights early in the decade and there would already be equality amendments to protect all minorities.

The resurgence of arch-conservative values has almost destroyed the 1988 presidential campaign. It seems that we're more interested in a candidate's sex life than his or her credentials. The scandals were humorous at first, but the laughter has died and now there's nothing left but candidates with their pants down, allowing us to glimpse every trivial, sordid thing they've done.



The 1960s revivalism in music has hit its peak this year. When was the last time the music charts were so inundated with remakes? Turn on any top-40 radio station right now and you'll hear "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay," "All Right Now," "I Think We're Alone Now," "Mony, Mony" and others. And if you want to hear the original versions, you can tune into a multitude of oldies stations. If you get tired of oldies, turn on MTV to see "1980s" music, but don't be surprised if most of it sounds like that 1970s gem, disco.

The early '80s showed some promise. Reagan was new in office, and people had not gotten over what they thought was a vacuum — the '70s. Music was enjoying a surge of creativity — new bands and new styles of sound were everywhere.

The consensus was that the '70s were boring, so everyone was ready to experiment. People were convinced that the '80s would break new ground, but for some reason someone decided the "'80s are just like the '60s," and everything fell apart.

Perhaps retroactivity is only an American problem. A recent issue of Conde Nast's Traveler magazine had an essay about how cutting-edge Japan has become. The essay cited Japan's strong stock market, yen and

technology, the sudden importance of Tokyo designers in the European fashion market, avant-garde musicians and architecture. But Japanese kids aren't wearing off-beat Japanese fashions and listening to Japanese music, the article said — they wear poodle skirts, leather jackets, sport D.A. hairdos and dance to '50s music in Tokyo's numerous '50s America clubs.

The reason? The author wrote that American '50s nostalgia is appealing to the Japanese because it typifies an innocence they never had after losing World War II.

Could it be that Americans are obsessed with '60s nostalgia because it typifies a quest for progress that eludes us?

New blood and energy will always be bubbling in the underground, waiting to surprise the public with something original. But the notion of "new" has almost become taboo these days, and people cringe at something that hasn't been done before. It's far too late in the decade for the public to accept a new trend. The last half of a decade always shapes that decade's identity — it takes years for anything to work its way into the mainstream. Hippies were around as early as the late '50s, some of them tucked under the "beatnik" label, but they didn't completely crawl out of obscurity until the mid-'60s.

The "New Age" movement — the spiritual hodgepodge of meditation, crystals and metaphysics that has yuppies going wild — may eventually become culturally significant, but not in the next few years. Perhaps by 1992 or 1993, but not in the end of the '80s because the "New Age" needs time if it expects to grow and gain acceptance.

If anything, the '80s display a blatant lack of sensibility. Without sensibility, we become zombies, devoid of thought, intellect or understanding.

And that's what these next two years are destined for, an age of cultural zombies. So we may as well start burying what's already dead and prepare for the afterlife in another generation and time, the '90s.

Harrah is a senior news-editorial and English major.

Letter

Are UNL students 'victims' or 'losers'?

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, if not the rest of the nation, appears adrift in linguistic lunacy where fact gives way to opinion. That this may also be a national phenomenon was evidenced on National Public Radio when a commentator noted that Gary Hart and Jack Kemp were "victims" in last Tuesday's primary elections.

Here was a case of linguistic idiocy. Hart and Kemp were not "victims"; they were simply losers.

To be a "victim" suggests innocence, lack of informed choice, gullibility, even ignorance.

Recently, the DN ran an editorial column suggesting there are no significant differences between an education at Nebraska and at Harvard. Predictably, a UNL administrator wrote to the DN lauding the students' "perceptiveness." Given the structural realities of higher education — and the very real job placements of the graduates of the nation's leading universities (such as Harvard) — such editorials and letters do only one thing: undermine the meaning of

language.

A professor wrote to the DN correctly chiding a previous letter for failure to comprehend the basic facts of racial injustice in American society. Such facts, the professor observes, fail to spark the intellectual interest or effective concern of Nebraska students. But how can they when students today use language to blur — if not obliterate — the distinction between fact and ill-formed opinion?

We have now in Lincoln an institution with "students" who appear to think there is no racial discrimination, who think that the women's revolution has been "won," and who think Nebraska stands head and shoulders with the likes of Harvard. Given the present linguistic confusion in which such absurdity is partially rooted, I can't decide between appropriate adjectives. Are the "students" at Nebraska "losers" or "victims"?

Michael R. Hill doctoral candidate sociology

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.

Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. Whether material should run as a letter or guest opinion, or not, run, is left to the editor's discretion. Letters and guest opinions sent to

the newspaper become property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.