

Daily Nebraskan University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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ASUN praiseworthy

Firm stand for burial rights commended

ASUN Sen. Brian Svoboda and the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska are to be commended.

At a Wednesday night meeting, the ASUN Senate passed Svoboda's bill to support the return of the Nebraska State Historical Society's collection of all identifiable Pawnee Indian remains to the tribe.

ASUN's bill gives support to LB340, a bill in the Nebraska Legislature calling for the return of the remains to the Indians for burial.

ASUN's action only adds to a long list of supporters of LB340 -- a list the Legislature should take heed of when voting on LB340 later this week or next.

By supporting the bill, ASUN took a bold and firm stand on an important human rights issue -- one that has an effect not only on American Indians, but on society as a whole.

Debate over the issue has included the historical society's argument that the collection is invaluable for research and education.

But the historical society has had some of the remains for more than 50 years -- ample time for research.

ASUN Sen. Chip Dreesen said keeping the remains is "too heavy a price to pay for education."

Dreesen is right. He asked senators to think about what they would do if their ancestors' remains were dug up and kept in a museum -- to put themselves in the Indians' position.

The issue is not just over a museum's collection of old bones and artifacts. It has caused anger, frustration and humiliation to an important group in the community.

And as Svoboda said, it is not a "minority" issue, but an issue about respecting the dead -- something done in every culture and society.

The real issue is human dignity. The right of a person to be put to rest, in peace, should be a given. People should not have to fight to take their relatives out of glass cases to lay them to rest.

Svoboda cited a letter from Attorney General Robert Spire supporting LB340. In the letter, Spire said the American Association of Museums has adopted a policy that "reflects the general law that human skeletal remains are to rest in peace in a grave or other proper sepulcher except where an appropriate purpose can be established for removing and retaining the remains."

The Nebraska State Historical Society has endorsed this position in the past -- and there is no reason the society should not endorse it now.

Svoboda said there was no reason for anyone to vote against the bill -- to vote against giving decent people a decent burial.

But four ASUN senators did vote against supporting LB340 -- Sens. Bill Munn, Jill Durbin, Nancy Chapek and Phil Gosch.

Chapek was concerned the bill would draw the Government Liaison Committee away from other important issues. But ASUN amended the bill to exclude GLC's involvement in the issue before the vote was taken.

Munn said because LB340 is only on general file, it could be amended to a point where he would not agree with the bill. But ASUN also passed an amendment before the vote to support the bill "as it stands on this date."

That blows their arguments out of the water. The other two senators did not offer a reason for their opposition.

Nevertheless, with the exception of those who voted against the bill, ASUN made a wise decision Wednesday night -- one that showed concern for the history of Nebraska -- the beliefs of the people who were here before us.

Lessons of history, science and others' beliefs mean nothing unless they are remembered and respected.

-- Amy Edwards for the Daily Nebraskan



Columnist discusses problems

Heckman sees widespread apathy, ignorance of world events

Graduation... What a glorious thought it is. It is also a very frightening thought. No longer will I be sheltered from the big bad world by this university. I will be open and exposed to the goings on of the world.

while broadcasting the words of Martin Luther King Jr. over a loud-speaker. But these few are a decided minority. The vast majority belong to the other group.

starving and homeless here in America, in Lincoln? How many of us know or care about them?

What about our federal government, which continually ignores these problems? Our federal government has grown so large it can no longer effectively deal with many of our problems. We the people of America can change this. Do we? No, most of us bitch about the way things are going and do nothing but sit on our behinds.



Why am I writing about this when no one cares anyway? I guess I am a slow learner. And I do care, and it is important to me that more of you care. Right now this planet we call Earth is faced with so many incredible problems I get scared thinking about it.

Some of you are saying "Big deal, Heckman, what the hell does this have to do with anything, especially me." What does it have to do with you? Everything. It's easy to ignore the world now, but I guarantee that in a few years you will graduate and be facing the same problems and questions I do now.

Or maybe not. Graduation does not guarantee enlightenment, nothing does in fact. The only way for anyone to become aware is for them to want to. I can write about this for years and it will make no difference unless you want it to. This is my challenge to you. Don't go through life unaware. Take a few years off, have fun, get drunk and fall down. But someday, next week or next year, take a stand on an issue -- care.

I'm not saying to give away all your worldly possessions and devote your life to world peace. I am saying that to go through life without getting involved in societies' problems is a waste. It's your choice, make it and live it. I made mine.

Heckman is a senior international affairs major and a Daily Nebraskan editorial columnist.

Reader: COLAGE decision lacks compassion

So here we are, the enlightened 20th century humanitarians, perpetrators of progress, possessors of wondrous intelligence.

Anglo-Saxon, Puritanical social norms. We have taken Christianity to a new plateau, higher than it has even been before. We have deemed ourselves God. We have made ourselves judges of humankind.

found. We have killed them. In our pursuit of godless lust and power we have lost sight of our objectives. We have mislabeled our prejudices as morality. We have invoked censorship as justice. We have swept the dust under the carpet.

Singing our own praises of our great compassion, of our kinder, gentler world. Yet despite our self-proclaimed glory we continue to legislate inferiority.

But in this we have gone too far. The blind have led the blind into the pit. We have assumed too much. Christianity never gave us the power to judge, only the responsibility to love our enemies as ourselves. To have compassion and empathy for those who share this earth with us. To take in knowledge and deepen our understanding of that which we know not of, that we may be wise, kind, just.

But the carpet will wear thin, the light will shine through to the downtrodden. They will rise up and take what is theirs. They will become our equals. We will be forced to practice that which we have professed for so long.

By labeling "problem peoples" as pagans, communists and immoral, we have made them subhuman -- less than equal, good but not quite good enough. All of this from a nation that found its origin in escape from religious intolerance and persecution.

Democracy has not given us undying power. It has given us equality without regard to color, sex, national origin, personal ideals. It has granted us freedom of choice, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom to live without fear.

We yet have the opportunity to take the initiative ourselves. It is not yet too late to give freedom generously and unequivocally, bestowed with love, to our fellow woman/man. It is not yet too late to share our love without restriction, without qualification. To give our love freely we can know what it is to receive love, to be wise, to be free.

But it did not take long for power to rear its evil head. For the persecuted to become the persecutor. The persecutor, in the name of God. In the name of justice, as a self-proclaimed protector of all that is good and decent on the earth.

So where is the true Christianity, the true democracy which we chose to hold so dear? They cannot be

And here we are today, in this bastion of higher learning, languishing in the cradle of democracy. Perpetuating the assumed Christian,

Bill Heule COLAGE member Lincoln

editorial

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