

opinion READER

# Students react to ASUN, RHA actions

## Students deserve to have a voice

Now that the ASUN election season is well under way, we students are once again hearing the same old talk about the same old issues.

One perennial topic -- student apathy -- kept popping up at the ASUN-sponsored debate last Thursday. As the candidates offered their solutions to the problem of apathy, I was reminded of a conversation I had once with a friend of mine, an off-campus student who was then about to graduate.

"Don't you understand?" he asked. "We like it this way. We don't care if the greeks run ASUN. ASUN doesn't do anything, so the greeks can't screw anything up for the rest of us."

After some time, it occurred to me that he had a point. And the problem with all the current ASUN student election groups is that none of them have quite grasped this point.

The power of ASUN as an institution is severely limited. It has no direct control over the allocation of student fees, save to make recommendations to the university administration and the NU Board of Regents. It has no actual vote on the board, only as an ex-officio vote, which is not counted when the board's decisions are made.

It can only offer advice when dealing with policies affecting the Nebraska Union, residence hall visitation and a host of other issues. The net result of all this is that students become apathetic, seeing student government as irrelevant to their lives and their educations. Indeed, why should they vote, if those whom they elect wield little actual power?

This is the fundamental question which next year's ASUN president must deal with. The problem with student apathy lies not in a lack of

communications between ASUN and the student body, as some candidates have suggested. The students of this campus know quite well what ASUN does. The real problem is that we have a castrated student government, rendered impotent by a lack of real decision-making power.

I challenge the presidential candidates to deal with this problem and to offer twin agendas of empowerment and inclusion. The student body of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln must be allowed to hold real power in the university decision-making process. They should be able to control the allocation of their own student fees. They should have a vote -- a real vote -- on the NU Board of Regents. They should be able to make binding decisions affecting Nebraska Union administration and other areas of student concern.

ASUN has made some progress this year in terms of both empowerment and inclusion. It got the ex-officio regent vote, which is better than nothing. It has made a clear effort to involve non-greek and minority students in the campus political process. But much more needs to be done. Next year's student regent should work toward a real vote, and real power. Next year's executives and senators should begin to place non-greek and minority students not only on the senate and the various advisory boards, but in real positions of importance -- committee chairmanships, the Speaker's position, and the Government Liaison Committee chairmanship, just to name a few.

We as students have become so resigned to our present lot that we have lost our vision and desire for change.

While campaigning for president in 1968, Robert Kennedy used to end his speeches with a remark paraphrased from the playwright George Bernard Shaw.

"Some men see things as they are,

and ask why," he said. "I dream things that never were, and ask why not."

It is time for student leaders to transcend the boundaries of the current debate. It is time for them to dream.

Brian Svoboda  
ASUN senator  
College of Arts and Sciences

## Students question editorial comments

In response to Amy "The Denouncer" Edwards' editorial concerning RHA, we would like to make a few remarks (DN, March 6).

First, and most obvious, this editorial is the type of unfocused and one-sided journalism we have all come to expect from the Daily Nebraskan's editorial page. It seems that Edwards arrived at the conclusion that she has the power to denounce whole organizations on the basis of a single incident, an incident which needs no defending. How does one get licensed to denounce?

For those who don't know, RHA discussed the expenditure of \$13.05 at Burger King by one of its committees. The discussion lasted approximately 45 minutes, not the "majority of the meeting," as Edwards wrote in her editorial. The editorial you wrote, which excommunicated RHA from all of UNL, is the longest work devoted to RHA in the DN this year.

Edwards humorously called RHA a "comedy club with nothing better to do on Thursday nights . . ." The true humor is that Edwards was not in attendance at this meeting and, to our knowledge, has never been to an RHA meeting. Hence, it appears her entire vindictive editorial was written on second-hand knowledge. More humor . . . President Koubsky was only half quoted in Edwards' editorial. While he did know about the

committee's meeting place, he didn't realize they'd be spending RHA funds.

So, what we have is an editor denouncing RHA on the basis of a 45-minute discussion that was legitimate; hardly reproachful. With one of us being a former editorial editor, it seems appropriate to teach Edwards a lesson: Use a wide angle lens when composing editorials, not a narrow minded approach. Explore both sides of the issue and place it in proper context.

RHA ran a successful All Residence Hall Open Forum (ARHOF) last fall, has become an active member in the National Association of College and University Residence Halls, staffed and maintained a successful office, published the "Senate" and "Hallways" newsletters, and was active in Alcohol Awareness Week. Moreover, RHA continued to represent its constituents by delivering the housing rate study, under the guidance of chairman Doug Breuer, and by creating an Alcohol Awareness Task Force.

Unlike Edwards, I do realize that there are two sides to this issue. The senate has indeed become more debate-oriented. Yes, it does seem that \$13.05 is nothing to become "furious" about, but the amount, the committee, and the act, in and of itself, are not the true issues here, as you strive to make it seem to be. We call upon you to acknowledge us for our fiscal accountability. Don't state that we merely follow the lead of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska for it seems they followed our lead on the polling site issue. Don't say that we rehash old issues year after year when, indeed, we offered ARHOF to our constituents, a great innovation for this university.

In fact, now we're convinced that a topic at the next ARHOF should be the Daily Nebraskan and editors who take it upon themselves to denounce

entire societies who are working for the good of their constituents.

To use your own words: "If Miss Edwards would start acting like a responsible journalist, students would start respecting her like one." We've earned respect, and we'll be damned if your failing as a responsible journalist is going to jeopardize that.

Marc Shkolnick  
RHA vice president

Larry Koubsky  
RHA president

**Editor's Note: The Residence Hall Association, like any other public body, is open to criticism when it does something worthy of criticism. In its news sections, any newspaper's responsibility is to print unbiased and balanced articles, as the Daily Nebraskan does. But on the editorial page -- an opinion page -- a newspaper expresses its views, and does not need to present the other side. The DN does this, and will continue to do so.**

Edwards has lived in the residence halls, and covered RHA as a beat reporter for a semester. The DN reports on RHA every week.

## editorial

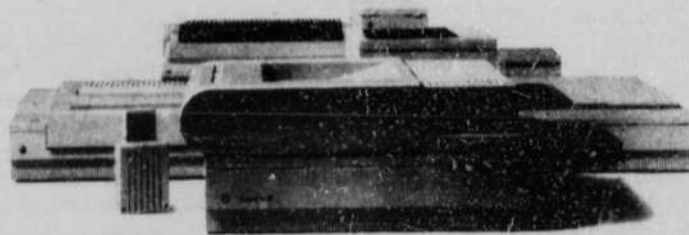
Signed staff editorials represent the official policy of the fall 1988 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are Curt Wagner, editor; Amy Edwards, editorial page editor; Jane Hirt, managing editor; Lee Rood, associate news editor; Lisa Donovan, columnist; Diana Johnson, wire page editor; and Chuck Green, copy desk chief.

According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student editors.

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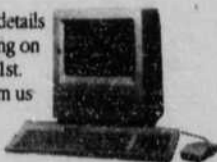
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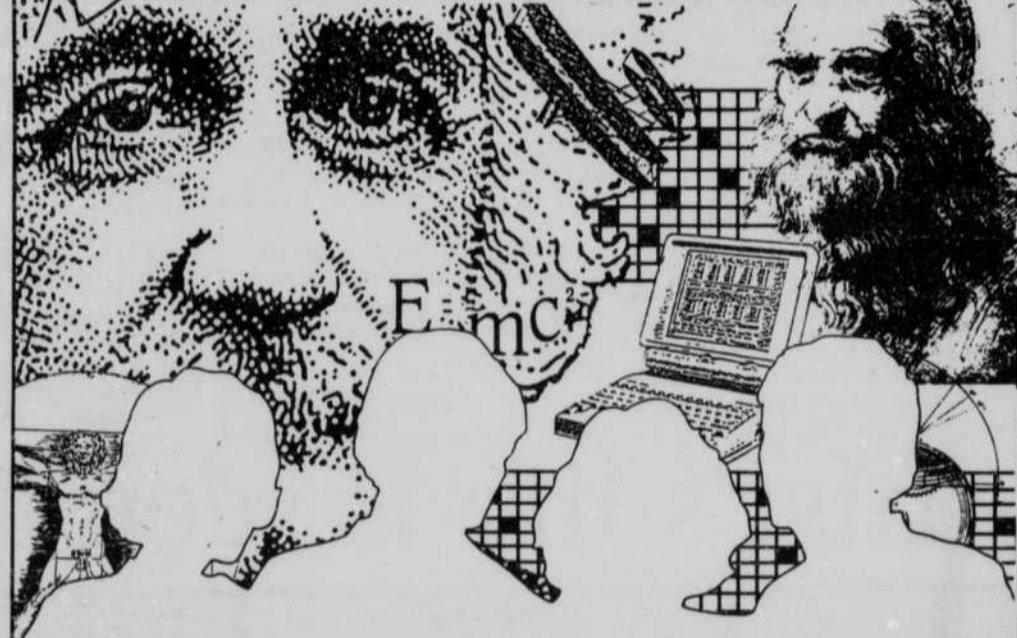
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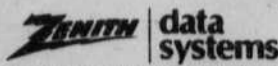
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