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Apathy a concern

Longer campaigns a possible solution

Voter turnout for the ASUN elections this year was at its lowest point in the last four years.

With all the concern about student apathy, maybe the electoral commission should lengthen the amount of campaign time.

This is the second year campaigns have been limited to one month, and voter turnout has dropped each year.

One of the concerns for the time limit, according to Electoral Commission Director Mark Fahleson, was that candidates were spending too much time campaigning, and stress from the elections hurt their studies -- a valid argument.

Marlene Beyke, ASUN adviser, said the election commission also thought that candidates could use their time more wisely for campaigning if the campaigns were shortened.

But from the percentage of students who voted in the last two campaigns, and the low-impact debates this year, it seems that candidates are not soliciting students' interest.

In 1986-87, four parties ran for ASUN. Voter turnout was 14 percent of the student body. In the 1987-88 elections, there were six parties and 15 percent of the students voted.

Last year, when the one-month limit was imposed, 13.42 percent of the students voted for three parties. This year, there were four parties, and only 11.72 percent of the students voted.

The decrease in voter turnout could be attributed to a lot of different things. The number of parties running for election and the issues being debated probably have a lot to do with the number of students who show interest in the elections.

Beyke said another possible reason for low voter turnout could be that the student advisory board slots were not filled. Underclassmen usually fill the slots for advisory board, she said, and often have more enthusiasm for recruiting voters.

But whatever the reasons, something should be done to increase student awareness and voting in the ASUN elections.

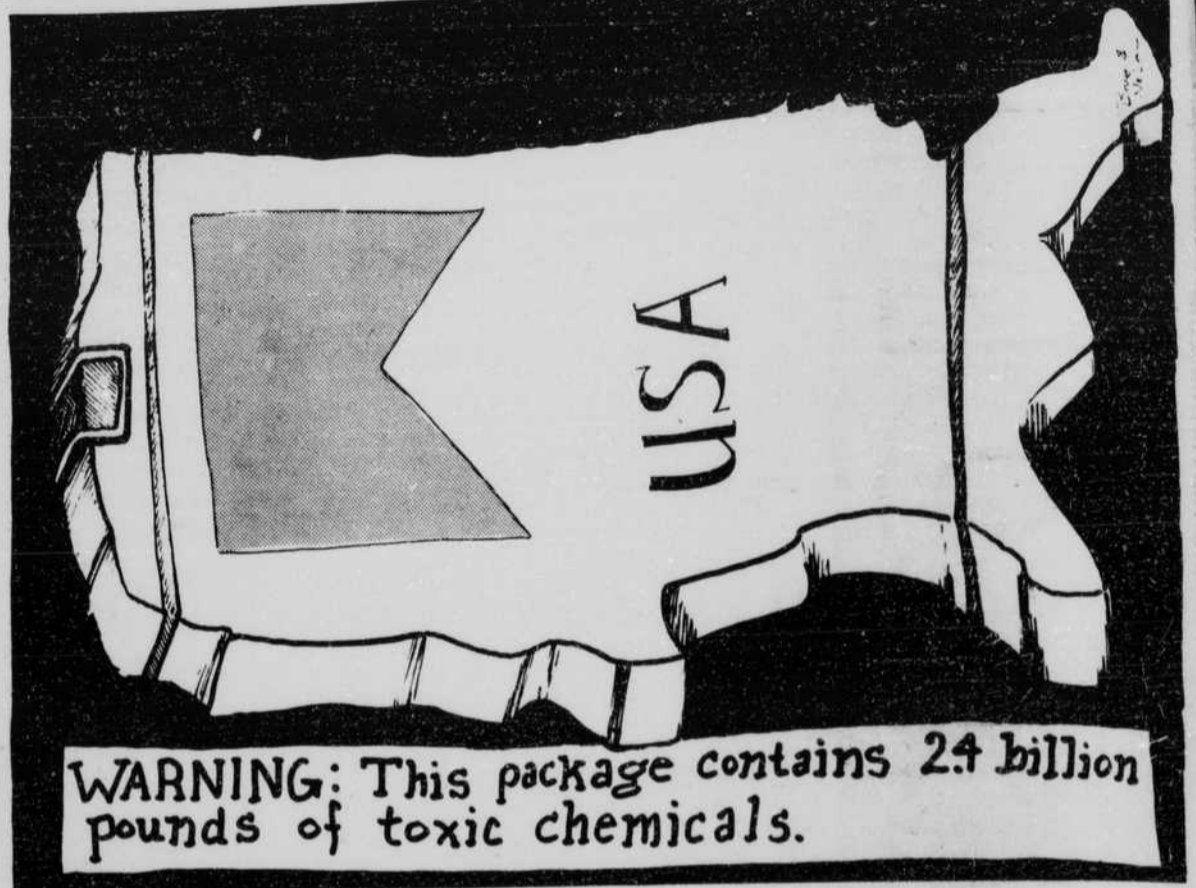
When campaigns are limited to one month, students don't get much time to get to know the candidates. Debates are not well-attended, and students aren't aware of all the issues on the ballot.

Debates also don't get very heated. And instead of the issues, candidates debate the competency of their adversaries. The mud-slinging is petty and it gives students the impression that ASUN is not a worthwhile organization.

Eventually, students just don't care.

Fahleson said he is not sure there is a real solution to student apathy in elections, and he may be right. But the electoral commission should check into ways to better sell elections to students, so students understand the issues and vote for the people who best represent them.

-- Amy Edwards
for the Daily Nebraskan



Governmental atrocities abound

Columnist abhors country's 'in deed' support of foreign policies

There currently exist two areas of the world where the living conditions and the treatment of the people who live there are deplorable. These areas are South Africa and Lebanon. Ironically, the United States supports the oppressive regime -- if not in words, then definitely in deed.

Just about everyone is familiar with the situation in South Africa. The white minority government continues to suppress the majority black and Indian populations. This policy is known as apartheid. Personally, I think the policy of apartheid is bullshit.

Since 1985, when the government declared a "state of emergency," the police have had almost unlimited power to interfere with the lives of the blacks. Under apartheid policies, people can be jailed indefinitely with no charges brought against them. This is one of the most demoralizing things possible -- to be locked away with no idea of how long you will be there.

But the news gets worse. The current president, P.W. Botha, is recovering from a stroke and his ability to rule is limited. He recently has come under increased pressure to resign and let a Mr. DeKlerck take control. DeKlerck is more conservative than Botha -- which could spell even tougher times for the black majority.

Although the United States has denounced the policy of apartheid, it continues to deal with the minority government. The U.S. government uses various excuses for continuing business as usual, but what it really comes down to is that none of the government's reasons hold any air. There is no good reason to continue supporting the Botha regime.

In fact, there is a very good reason not to. Apartheid will end. That is a given fact. The end will either be violent or peaceful. I have a feeling it will not be peaceful -- things have

gone too far for that to happen. So we are facing a violent revolution in South Africa. The blacks will finally achieve their goals.

And don't think for a second that the new government won't remember the actions of the United States. People will remember the continued support of apartheid, and they will not be pleased. Then the United States will be placed in the position of having "real" security concerns. The pseudo-problems that Washington has given for support of apartheid will become real problems with the post-apartheid government.

basically ignored the plight of the Palestinians living there -- the same way they have ignored the plight of the Palestinians they displaced over 40 years ago when Israel was founded.

Worse yet is the continued "no questions asked" support by the United States. I agree that Israel may be in an area important to us, but our government often has gone overboard with this. Until last year, the United States refused to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization. Now our government has loosely committed itself to dealing with the PLO to find a solution to the problem of what should be done with the millions of displaced Palestinians. I hope that a solution can be found, but I fear it will lean heavily in favor of Israel.

Don't misunderstand me. I don't even begin to support the terrorism that the PLO has committed in the past. The useless killing of innocent people is deplorable -- but yet this is exactly what Israel has repeatedly done to the Palestinians. Instead of a horrible outcry from the United States, there is silence each time an Israeli soldier kills an innocent child. Only when there is an act of terrorism by the PLO does our government raise its voice.

In both cases -- South Africa and the West Bank and Gaza Strip -- atrocities are being committed. In both cases the United States gives at least tacit support to the governments committing them. Through that support, the United States is condoning the atrocities itself. I am not proud of the United States' support for either country.

In fact, I am not proud of my own country. Are you?

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

Craig Heckman



The West Bank and the Gaza Strip are sites for more atrocities committed in the name of "National Security." In the 15 months since a Palestinian uprising began to protest the Israeli presence, more than 400 people have been killed. Most have been Palestinians, but some were Israeli soldiers.

In the "occupied territories," as they have come to be known, the Israeli soldiers are in an impossible situation -- to control a population which believes that Allah rewards personal sacrifice for His greater good. This translates into rebelling against Israel and everything which represents Israel -- in this case, the soldiers. In response, the Israeli Army has tended to use excessive force in dealing with the Palestinians.

What really bothers me about this is that the Israelis have no real claim to the area. They captured it in the 1967 war. Since that time, they have

Students condemn columnist's concert review

In reference to the column (Daily Nebraskan, March 17) "Reserved concert seating vital," by Lisa Donovan, you seemed to enjoy yourself at the R.E.M. concert; were you one of those people drinking and toking up?

We dislike the insinuation that everyone smokes marijuana at concerts. Marijuana is illegal in this country and some of us concert-goers are law-abiding citizens who go to concerts to enjoy the music -- not to alter our minds with drugs. In the words of our former first lady and our personal idol, Nancy Reagan, "Just

say no!"

Also we imagine that as you pay \$15 for tickets to R.E.M. you would want to sit down so as to better enjoy the music (because we all know sitting has been proven as a better listening device). But if you would have gone to R.E.M. five or six years ago, you would have only paid \$5 and heard a lot more talent emanating from that "larger-than-life performer" that we so badly want to touch, which of course causes rushing of the stage and in turn causes trampling of people as you so clo-

quently pointed out.

We're also concerned about the 10 percent hearing loss you suffer from. If R.E.M. cares so much about its fans (as we're sure they do) then maybe at your request they'll lower the volume. If not, our advice to you is to stay home and not review any more concerts.

Hal Turner
engineering

Trent Cooper
art

editorial

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letter

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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 to run, is left to the editor's discretion.

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