

Daily Nebraskan
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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Choose a soft stick

Diplomacy answer to Nicaraguan problem

It's once again time for George Bush to do what he does best.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega has taken desperate and drastic action to rescue his government from the popular will in a country racked with economic and social strife.

Ortega's decision to end a truce with the U.S.-backed Contra rebels appears to be a last ditch ploy to validate denial of Nicaraguan free elections planned for February 25.

And at a time when Ortega is attempting to blame the need to stop elections on the Contras, it is imperative that Bush avoid any action that Ortega may use as a reason to deny a popular vote.

Ortega said Monday he was suspending the 19-month-old cease-fire with the Contras, citing continued rebel attacks. He also hinted that he might cancel the February elections.

He said, "It will depend on the Yankee Congress and the Yankee president that these elections take place on Feb. 25."

White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater has said that Ortega's announcement, "underscores the Sandinista regime's lack of commitment to the peace process and democratization in Nicaragua."

Asked about prospects for renewing military aid for the Contras, Fitzwater said, "We don't want to go that route. We want to get free elections."

This is certainly admirable, but along with not asking Congress for more money, the White House must carefully avoid any action or rhetoric which could be used by Ortega to make a legitimate case in his country for repealing elections.

George Bush has received a lot of heat for talking big and carrying a soft stick. This is not the time for him to change that image. The White House should continue its push for a diplomatic solution in Nicaragua -- a policy that hopefully will allow the people of that country to carry their own big stick.

-- Bob Nelson
for the Daily Nebraskan

Vague law could lead to abuse

Editor's note: This letter, which was in Wednesday's Daily Nebraskan, is being printed again because the author's name was not included.

Lest the DN's readership conclude that those of the pro-life persuasion have a bent desire to oppress poverty-stricken rape victims, Lee Rood's editorial "Abortion on Fine Line" (DN, Oct. 26) begs for a response.

The issue is whether to allow federal financing (through Medicaid) of abortion for victims of rape or incest. Wednesday, Oct. 25, the House of Representatives failed to override President George Bush's veto of such a proposal.

In her editorial, Rood criticizes anti-abortion activists and Bush for a lack of compassion. After all, they, unlike indigent women, will never have to face the consequences of the president's veto.

Rood's view of compassion is an ironic one. After all, women (indigent or not), unlike aborted unborn children, do not have to face the true consequence of an abortion. I would argue that true compassion values life, regardless of how it is conceived.

However, the true drawback of this bill is its potential for abuse. The bill states that for indigent women to qualify for a government-funded abortion, they must report a sexual assault promptly to a law-enforcement agency or public health service. Supporters failed to define clearly what is meant by a "public health service," or what frame is meant by a

requirement to "report (a sexual assault) promptly."

Conceivably, an abortion clinic or pro-abortion agency (such as Planned Parenthood) could be construed as a public health service. In addition, a requirement for "promptness" in reporting a rape is ambiguous. The last time in which "prompt reporting" of a rape was defined was during the Carter administration; then, "prompt reporting" meant within 60 days of the rape. Lastly, the bill makes no distinction between first degree and statutory rape.

Obviously, evidence of a rape rarely exists 60 days after the fact. Women who have not been raped could easily claim otherwise. A pregnant minor could claim to be a victim of statutory rape. If this bill were to be abused to its fullest potential, any pregnant women receiving Medicaid would be eligible for a government-funded abortion. All American taxpayers would have blood on their hands.

The position of pro-life advocates, then, reflects not a lack of compassion for indigent rape and incest victims, but a strong opposition to government-funded abortion-on-demand. Ultimately, it reflects a respect for the life of unborn children.

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P.S. By the way, keep "Jim's Journal."



Spirit of cooperation needed

Campus groups should work together, solve specific problems

This week, the season's first snow fell on campus. Well, OK -- it was only a few scattered flurries.

But thank God it wasn't anything more. If the past few years are any indication, hundreds of residence hall and fraternity residents would have poured onto campus streets -- first with snowballs and later, as things began to escalate, with rocks and pieces of ice.

The annual campus snowball fight is little more than a glorified riot. It generally pits fraternity versus residence hall in a primal, vicious fight. Property is destroyed and people are hurt. And the student body is embarrassed in the eyes of the community and the state.

There is, however, one small measure of good that has come from this so-called tradition. The snowball fight has come to provide a model of cooperation between fraternity, sorority, residence hall and student government leaders.

Presidents of the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic, the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and the Residence Hall Association typically have sat down together to figure out how to stop the fights, and how to combat the causes which lie beneath the surface. And, with the help of the police and university administrators, they've been somewhat successful.

And so a course of action suggests itself: what would happen if the four major campus organizations -- ASUN, RHA, IFC and Panhellenic -- were to make the same intense, cooperative effort on other issues?

This isn't to say that cooperation between these groups is non-existent. RHA, IFC and Panhellenic have started Strategic Planning Regarding Inter-Living-unit Activities (SPRILA), an attempt to build relationships between greek and residence hall constituencies. ASUN currently is trying to revamp its Residence Liaison Committee, which ex-

ists for much the same purpose.

But because these initiatives are oriented toward such broad, nebulous objectives, their success is fated to be limited. Inter-residence cooperation is most successful when geared toward specific, immediate problems like the snowball fights.

Such problems aren't hard to find on today's campus, either. Imagine what a coordinated ASUN-IFC-Panhellenic-RHA effort could accomplish with the following:



Brian Svoboda

● **Parking Safety.** The lots still need lighting, folks, and all it would take to bring students rioting into the streets is one reported rape or assault. The safety of residential (i.e. blue tag) parking lots is crucial to both the residence halls and the greek system. Yet little has been done.

● **Visitation.** The current university policy forbidding visits to fraternities, sororities and residence hall floors by members of the opposite sex after 2 a.m. is ridiculous. It's widely disobeyed in both fraternities and the residence halls, and it serves little useful purpose save to reassure concerned parents that NU Board of Regents are making their children live moral, upstanding lives.

● **Alcohol.** Like the visitation policy, the state laws and regents' policies regarding consumption of alcohol on campus are widely disobeyed in the residence halls and fraternities. And they long since have failed to satisfy any instrumental policy objective. If student safety is the issue, why are students then tacitly encouraged to drive off-campus for parties, and drive back drunk? If alcohol abuse is the issue, then how

are adult students expected to deal responsibly with alcohol when in their own home, they must drink secretly?

These issues and many others -- racism, student control of student fees, quality faculty -- present opportunities to transform the campus into a more vibrant and fulfilling place to live and go to school.

And more than anyone else, ASUN, IFC, Panhellenic and RHA have the resources to get the job done. The new student recreation center was built largely because of support from these groups, who sent their members en masse to the state capitol to show their support at legislative hearings.

What would happen, for instance, if ASUN, IFC, Panhellenic and RHA were to start a letter-writing campaign, in which parents of these groups' members would write the regents calling for better lighting in the parking lots, or changes in the visitation and alcohol policies?

Now, the road to such cooperation undoubtedly is a rocky one. There is, as we all know, a certain tension between greek and non-greek students. Many non-greeks have the sense that, as F. Scott Fitzgerald may have put it, the very greek are different from you and me.

But all too often such differences are imagined and not real. And they cause groups such as ASUN, IFC, Panhellenic and RHA to go it alone on issues when only teamwork will do.

No one is expecting these groups to cooperate out of the goodness of their hearts. As with the snowball fights, such cooperation mainly would come from a sense of self-interest. The time has come for IFC, Panhellenic and RHA to recognize that self-interest, and work together to change our campus. United we shall stand, but divided we shall fall.

Brian Svoboda is a political science and Russian major, and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

editorial

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letter

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