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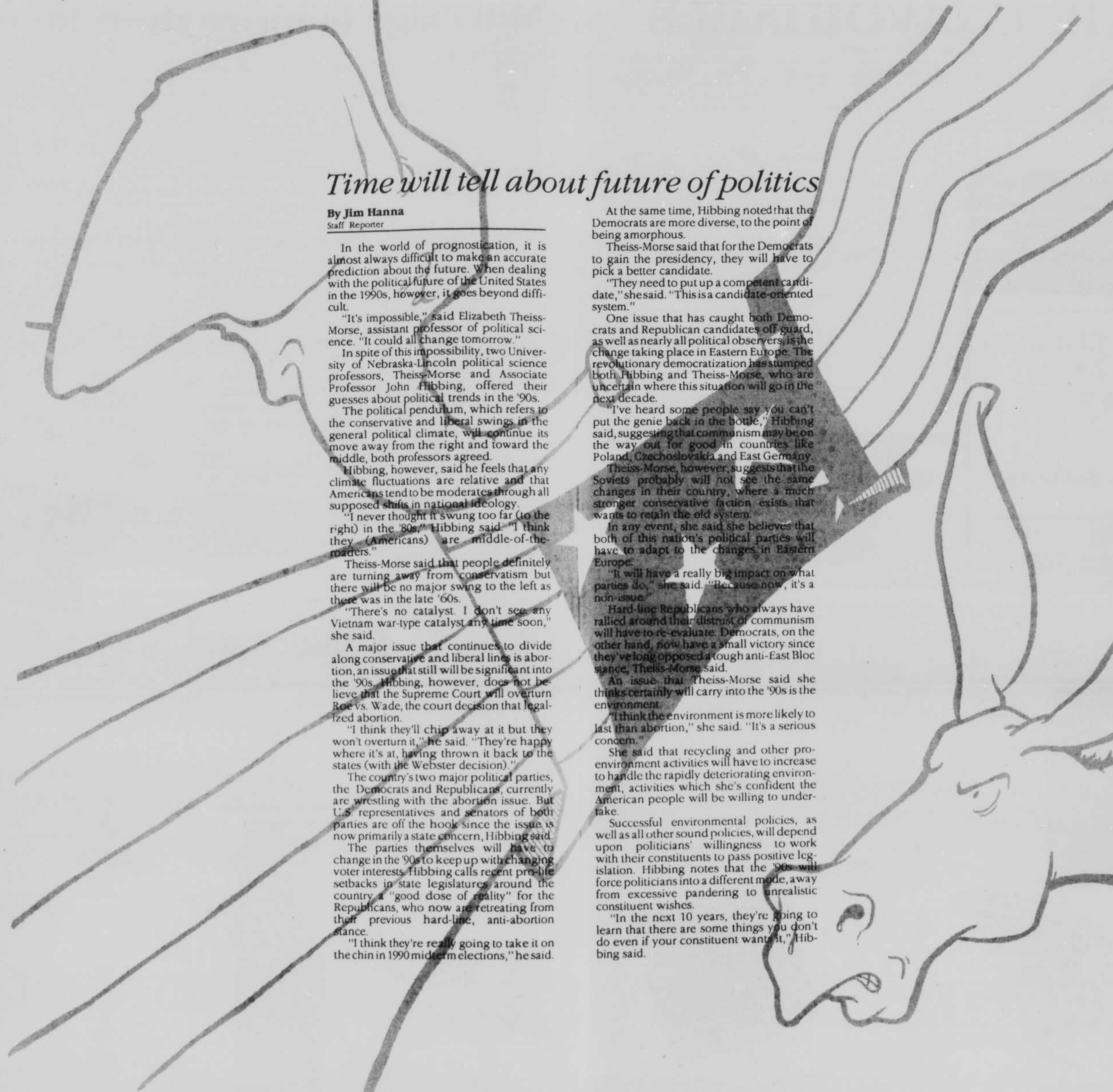
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Wednesday, Dec. 20 - 12:00	Wednesday, Dec. 20 - 12:00
Thursday, Dec. 21 - 12:00	Thursday, Dec. 21 - 10:30



**Time will tell about future of politics**

By Jim Hanna  
Staff Reporter

In the world of prognostication, it is almost always difficult to make an accurate prediction about the future. When dealing with the political future of the United States in the 1990s, however, it goes beyond difficult.

"It's impossible," said Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, assistant professor of political science. "It could all change tomorrow."

In spite of this impossibility, two University of Nebraska-Lincoln political science professors, Theiss-Morse and Associate Professor John Hibbing, offered their guesses about political trends in the '90s.

The political pendulum, which refers to the conservative and liberal swings in the general political climate, will continue its move away from the right and toward the middle, both professors agreed.

Hibbing, however, said he feels that any climate fluctuations are relative and that Americans tend to be moderates through all supposed shifts in national ideology.

"I never thought it swung too far (to the right) in the '80s," Hibbing said. "I think they (Americans) are middle-of-the-roaders."

Theiss-Morse said that people definitely are turning away from conservatism but there will be no major swing to the left as there was in the late '60s.

"There's no catalyst. I don't see any Vietnam war-type catalyst any time soon," she said.

A major issue that continues to divide along conservative and liberal lines is abortion, an issue that still will be significant into the '90s. Hibbing, however, does not believe that the Supreme Court will overturn Roe vs. Wade, the court decision that legalized abortion.

"I think they'll chip away at it but they won't overturn it," he said. "They're happy where it's at, having thrown it back to the states (with the Webster decision)."

The country's two major political parties, the Democrats and Republicans, currently are wrestling with the abortion issue. But U.S. representatives and senators of both parties are off the hook since the issue is now primarily a state concern, Hibbing said.

The parties themselves will have to change in the '90s to keep up with changing voter interests. Hibbing calls recent pro-life setbacks in state legislatures around the country a "good dose of reality" for the Republicans, who now are retreating from their previous hard-line, anti-abortion stance.

"I think they're really going to take it on the chin in 1990 mid-term elections," he said.

At the same time, Hibbing noted that the Democrats are more diverse, to the point of being amorphous.

Theiss-Morse said that for the Democrats to gain the presidency, they will have to pick a better candidate.

"They need to put up a competent candidate," she said. "This is a candidate-oriented system."

One issue that has caught both Democrats and Republican candidates off guard, as well as nearly all political observers, is the change taking place in Eastern Europe. The revolutionary democratization has stumped both Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, who are uncertain where this situation will go in the next decade.

"I've heard some people say you can't put the genie back in the bottle," Hibbing said, suggesting that communism may be on the way out for good in countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

Theiss-Morse, however, suggests that the Soviets probably will not see the same changes in their country, where a much stronger conservative faction exists that wants to retain the old system.

In any event, she said she believes that both of this nation's political parties will have to adapt to the changes in Eastern Europe.

"It will have a really big impact on what parties do," she said. "Because now, it's a non-issue."

Hard-line Republicans who always have rallied around their distrust of communism will have to re-evaluate. Democrats, on the other hand, now have a small victory since they've long opposed a tough anti-East Bloc stance, Theiss-Morse said.

An issue that Theiss-Morse said she thinks certainly will carry into the '90s is the environment.

"I think the environment is more likely to last than abortion," she said. "It's a serious concern."

She said that recycling and other pro-environment activities will have to increase to handle the rapidly deteriorating environment, activities which she's confident the American people will be willing to undertake.

Successful environmental policies, as well as all other sound policies, will depend upon politicians' willingness to work with their constituents to pass positive legislation. Hibbing notes that the '90s will force politicians into a different mode, away from excessive pandering to unrealistic constituent wishes.

"In the next 10 years, they're going to learn that there are some things you don't do even if your constituent wants it," Hibbing said.

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