

Professor concerned about restructuring

I was disappointed in your editorial (DN, Feb. 5) supporting ASUN President Bryan Hill's testimony concerning the NU Board of Regents' recorded opposition to LB1141 and LR239CA, just as I have been disappointed at the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska's quick (though qualified) approval of these pieces of legislation. What I read leads me to believe that student support of the reorganization plan derives mainly, if not solely, from the current regents' refusal to grant student board members a vote. While I have no objection whatever to a voting student regent (and recognize that the new campus boards would make such a thing simpler by assigning only one student regent per board), I find your position ironic in that LB1141 specifically excludes a vote for the student members of the campus boards.

But let's leave aside speculation about the motivation for the position you and Mr. Hill take, and indeed the motivation for the regents' opposition to the proposed reorganization. There are issues here that far transcend whether a regent doesn't want to lose his/her job or even whether students can vote on the current board. The problems with LB1141 and LR239CA are not "minor technicalities" by any means. First of all, the massive nature of the reorganization is akin to using a nuclear device on a dog which raids one's trash can. It creates position for 53 regents and trustees (not counting seven "nonvoting student members"), seven presidents and one chancellor (not to mention the Nebraska Higher Education Commission that sits on top of the whole structure). If students often find the current system cumbersome and unresponsive, how will they fare trying to work through two or three levels of bureaucracy only to be faced at the end of the process by the Legislature itself? I find it ironic that the very same campus leaders and legislature members who decried the firing of NU President Ronald Roskens and thought the previous system was quite good (only needing "fine tuning") now embrace eagerly a total overhaul of the whole state system of higher education.

That brings me to the second point. There is precious little in these two pieces of legislation about education, but there is a great deal about politics. Think about it. The governor will appoint all but five of the 53 regents/trustees, and in fact will appoint every single one of them as the new structure is implemented. The Higher Education Commission, which among other things feeds to the new regents the data on which they must base some of their decisions, is totally politicized. Moreover, despite the Widmayer and Associates principle that local campus governance is best, a reading of the new structure as now proposed will make it clear that the power to govern higher education in the state is gravitating directly back to the Legislature, from whence it was taken (at least technically) by the Regents vs. Exon decision. Finally, LB1141 does an end run around con-

stitutional challenges to making Kearney State College a university by declaring its intent in the proposed constitutional amendment to be that "the University of Nebraska at Kearney" be one of the campuses governed by a board of trustees. You'll remember that Dave Landis, among other state senators, admitted that LR239CA, making KSC into UNK, was a political, more than an educational, move.

My final general objection to the reorganization plan is that it is being put in place before the role and mission for all seven campuses has been examined and re-codified. The Legislature refused to deal with this issue when it passed LR239CA, and it refuses to do so now. Instead, it creates an amorphous higher education system which, labels aside, eliminates the University of Nebraska as a separate entity (not to mention any sense of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a "flagship"). It leaves to the new Board of Regents to determine which campus will have a statewide mission and which a local one, which campuses will offer master's and Ph.D degrees, where degree programs will and will not be offered and what admission standards will be approved at each campus. How much of a voice do you think students will have in such a process? How much of a voice will the faculty have, even though they are the ones with the expertise to determine the quality and structure of degree programs? And the Legislature maintains a stony silence about how all this will be paid for, which is an issue which finally transcends all educational decisions. Experience indicates that the state will not expend large amounts of new funding to pay for a multiplication of programs and the staff required to support the expanded governing system. What will happen is also evident for recent history -- such as the funding of the University of Nebraska at Omaha Fine Arts Building and the suggestion that UNL energy savings be used to prop up a teetering College of Engineering (ignoring the fact that these funds are now used to keep afloat a disastrously underfunded library).

My fear, then, is that LB1141 and LR239CA will create new problems, not solve old ones, and ultimately leave UNL -- and possibly all of the college and university campuses -- at a level of impoverishment detrimental to the education of our students. I hope you will consider these matters as the debate on the proposed legislation continues. My job is not threatened. I will be here -- barring disaster -- no matter what the Legislature does. Many student leaders will have graduated and gone on to their chosen careers. But we should all worry about the institution which will be left when the noise dies down and those of us who remain try to determine, in Robert Frost's words, "what to make of a diminished thing."

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Cause, not numbers, main issue

Henry Battistoni, was the primary intent of your column (DN, Feb. 8) really to make me waste an entire mouthful of coffee? Did you hope to win the "Lee Atwater" award for negative campaigning on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus this year?

What I do know, Henry, is that you and I must have attended two entirely different rallies. My daughter and I were at a pro-life rally that began at the State Capitol. We left after several speeches were given from the Federal Building. Was there a "mob scene" after that, Henry? My fault, I always leave the party early. And gosh, Henry, if I'd have known you would have been offended at the huge stick and poster my daughter was carrying, you know, the one with the ferocious teddy bear that said "Life is Beary Precious," well, I just never would have let her carry it. Even 4-year-olds should experience censorship.

Did I mention my daughter was adopted? Yeah, I knew when I adopted her that I'd get the chance someday to throw it in someone's face. I mean, since I've been so enlightened by you that I lack compassion, it couldn't possibly be because I love her or anything. It's just too bad that the doctor my daughter's biological mother went to see refused to perform an abortion at 20 weeks. Then I would have had more money and freedom for myself instead of having to buy size 10 toddler shoes, stop at the park on the way home from preschool or interrupt the writing of this letter to read a bedtime story to my baby girl.

I don't know, Henry. Does it really matter that much to you how many people were at the rally? When I left my house that morning, it didn't concern me how many other people would be there. Actually, it was extremely cold that day, and I was just kind of hoping I wouldn't freeze to death! But I had to go because I decided after several years of internal debate that I would take a pro-life stand. My conscience dictates that I do so. It is not an easy issue to deal with. I hesitate to even discuss the matter; the debate becomes so heated. I guess, Henry, I just wanted you to tell me why? Why

fan the already raging fire? Your article seemed so hateful. Or are you just jumping on the band wagon of dumping on the "little old lady fanatics?" I attended the rally with my four sisters, and I am the oldest at 32! Fanatical? Maybe about chocolate... but bombs? Henry, come on, I'm lucky if I can follow the recipe on the cake box correctly. Are there little old ladies in Pro-Life? I'd say so. Are there fanatics? Most likely. Are there people who bomb abortion clinics? Unfortunately, yes. Do the bombers and fanatics represent the mainstream? I would argue no. But, Henry, watch out for those little old ladies; they will ply you with homemade chocolate chip cookies, and before you know it, you'll be putty in their hands!

I don't even know, Henry, why I bothered to write. I've never responded to a piece before. But I couldn't let your column go unanswered. Does it matter to you or anyone else in the Pro-Choice movement what my opinion is? Would it matter to you if I told you, "Gee, some of my best friends have had abortions!" Would you believe me when I tell you that maybe I do have compassion? That I understand how difficult it is to raise a child when you are a single parent? Most importantly, that I believe a person is a person at conception? If people choose to believe that a baby can be aborted because it cannot survive on its own outside the mother's womb, then tell me how many 2-, 3-, or even 4-year-olds could survive without some kind of intervention. That, Henry, is what we should be discussing, not how many people were at the rally!

Anyway, Henry, thanks for listening... but I promised my daughter I'd give her a few hints on how to get the other members of her "koola" group to riot in opposition to naptime at her preschool. And the article in the paper will read, "The anti-nap group, who estimated the crowd at their rally at 50 gazillion, but I only counted six..."

Mary Shirley-McGuire
freshman
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