

Readers attack restructuring and Nelson's homophobia

Resources lost in restructuring

In my forty years of teaching at the University of Nebraska, I have seen the university develop from a fine provincial institution into a university of national prominence. Academically it is now stronger than it has been for at least three generations. This assertion is easy to document. It seems to me both unwise and uneconomical to upset this productive organization by radical reorganization.

The question to ask of any proposed restructure is this: How would the students benefit from it? How would the men and women in the classrooms and laboratories be better taught because of administrative reorganization? What is the value to education of adding a whole new layer of bureaucracy?

I can see no good coming to students.

On the contrary, they stand to be shortchanged. Boards, directors and administrators cost money -- lots of money. Bureaucracy is the beast that eats all grain. In adding fifty new adviser-administrators, we add fifty more expense accounts. We all know about expense accounts. We all know, in addition, how new boards develop secretarial and clerical staffs, and we see bureaucrats gather increasing numbers of research assistants to perform tasks they lay out for themselves. All this costs money.

Where is this money for a new bureaucracy to come from? As a native Nebraskan, I know that the state has limited resources. We cannot expect the Legislature to provide new funds. As a result, the students will be disadvantaged, because money which might be spent on teaching, libraries and classrooms will be drawn off into administration, to boards far removed from the daily responsibilities of teaching and learning. Instructional budgets and research allocations will be further diminished as governing bureaucracy robs Peter to pay Paul.

The proposed reorganization of higher education could bring yet another disadvantage to the students who must have free access to divergent points of view. A whole new layer of appointees might politicize higher education. Through political pressures and beholden officials, special interest groups and legislative whim could dictate subject matter and organization of instruction. Colleges, departments and subjects could be rearranged according to power politics independent of educational justification. Single issue zealots could bend professional conduct in departments such as history, gynecology and obstetrics, agricultural economics and all the arts. Students deserve uncensored instruction, but current proposals remove time-built protections from capricious partisan interference.

As a native and life-long resident of Nebraska, I conclude that the outsiders who propose this radical reconstruction do not know our business as well as natives can. Change for the sake of change is not a Nebraska habit, and this particular proposal seems unwise, uneconomical and threatening to the intellectual life of the state. And it can not benefit the students.

Robert E. Knoll
D.B. and Paula Varner Professor of English

Argument based on bad assumptions

Bob Nelson, your editorial of Feb. 13 supporting the homophobic Andy Rooney, demonstrates faulty logic, as well as two forms of homophobia. Rooney was suspended by his employer, CBS, for allegedly making racist remarks in an interview with Chris Bull of the Advocate, a gay magazine. No one denies that Mr. Rooney was interviewed by Mr. Bull, or that the remarks attributed to him were racist. Mr. Rooney denies having made the remarks while Mr. Bull stands by his interview. CBS apparently finds the charge both credible and worthy of censure. You claim that Mr. Bull is lying on the basis of

derogatory remarks made by Mr. Rooney about Mr. Bull. You also believe that because Mr. Rooney won an Emmy in 1968 for a script about African-Americans and is a public figure, he could not possibly have made racist remarks in an interview in 1990. These are weak arguments. CBS is familiar with Mr. Rooney's record and image; perhaps they know something you don't.

In any case, I am offended by the homophobic double standard you use in judging "what really happened." You accept Mr. Rooney's slanderous claim that Mr. Bull "couldn't take notes," without acknowledging that Mr. Rooney is perhaps not the most disinterested judge of Mr. Bull's not-taking abilities. You assume, in effect, that gay journalists are less credible than other journalists, that gay journalists have axes to grind, but that a straight television journalist who has just received a three-month's suspension is a source of the true gospel.

You also believe that anti-gay remarks are less worthy of censure than other expressions of bigotry. You raise no objection to the notion of censoring racist remarks. On the contrary, you endorse a harsher penalty for the racist comments Mr. Rooney allegedly made. But you have no objection to Mr. Rooney's indisputable history of anti-gay remarks. The right to make homophobic remarks, you imply, is protected by freedom of speech, but there is no right to make racist remarks. This again, is a homophobic double stan-

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Distorted views irritate reader

Seems as though that anymore, it's not even allowable to have a different point of view. Your comments, Mr. Battistoni (DN, Feb. 8), left me wondering if that's really the case after all. No matter on which side of the abortion issue one sits (you may correctly assume that I oppose legalized abortion as it is now), your characterization is only slightly less extreme and absurd than those who bomb and burn. You have used your pen and position to freely and indiscriminately distort an issue and stereotype a group most likely as diverse as any you may consider yourself a part of.

I was at the Pro-Life march -- the first I've ever attended. I went be-

cause of what I believe in. The tone of your article suggests I'm some sort of hate-monger and terrorist. Those are, in fact, your words. At no time did I ever see cross words between any persons or groups of people. I did see a line of peaceful marchers over a half-mile long of certainly more than 2,000 and probably also less than 15,000. These are people, human beings -- not locusts or rabble-rousers as you did, in fact, describe them. They chose, in a very peaceful and legal way, to voice their right to free-

dom of speech. If that makes them or me a hypocrite, then so be it.

If journalism is your chosen profession, I should hope you come to realize the difference between disagreeing with someone and condemning them. It seems to me that condemning someone as you have in your article is much more hateful than anything I saw in the "Walk for Life."

Thomas J. Hoffman
Lincoln

Joel I. Brodsky
Ph.D. sociology

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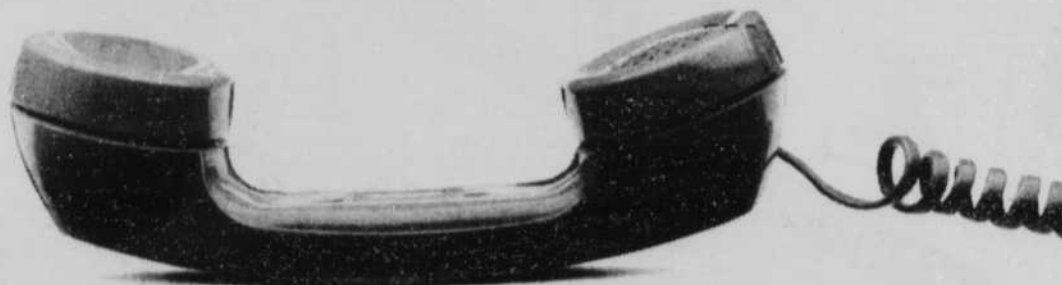



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