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Court denies rights

Religious input should not be restricted

Nebraska's highest court expanded its jurisdiction Friday onto the sacred ground of religious expression.

Upholding a Douglas County District Court ruling, the Nebraska Supreme Court voted 6-1 to restrict Edward LeDoux from exposing his children, who are in the custody of his ex-wife Diane LeDoux, to discussions and activities related to his Jehovah's Witness faith.

District Court Judge Robert Burkhard concluded that exposing the children to two religions would be injurious to them. This decision came after Burkhard heard testimony linking the troubled behavior of one of the children directly to Edward LeDoux's attempt to include the child in the activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Court ruling stated, "When a court finds that particular religious practices pose an immediate and substantial threat to a child's temporal well-being, a court may fashion an order aimed at protecting the child from that threat."

The majority said that the order "is narrowly tailored in that it imposes the least possible intrusion upon Edward LeDoux's right of free exercise of religion and the custodial mother's right to control the religious training of a child."

The minority, Judge Thomas Shanahan, saw the ruling differently.

"What the majority has characterized as a 'narrowly tailored' visitation order is, in reality, a judicial strait-jacket, constricting Edward LeDoux and preventing him from discussing with his children any religious belief or practice which may contradict or conflict with the Catholic doctrine."

Shanahan correctly goes on to state that the ruling thus prohibits the father's free exercise of his religion in reference to his children. This form of restriction, Shanahan said, "constitutes a denial of religious freedom protected by the state and federal constitutions."

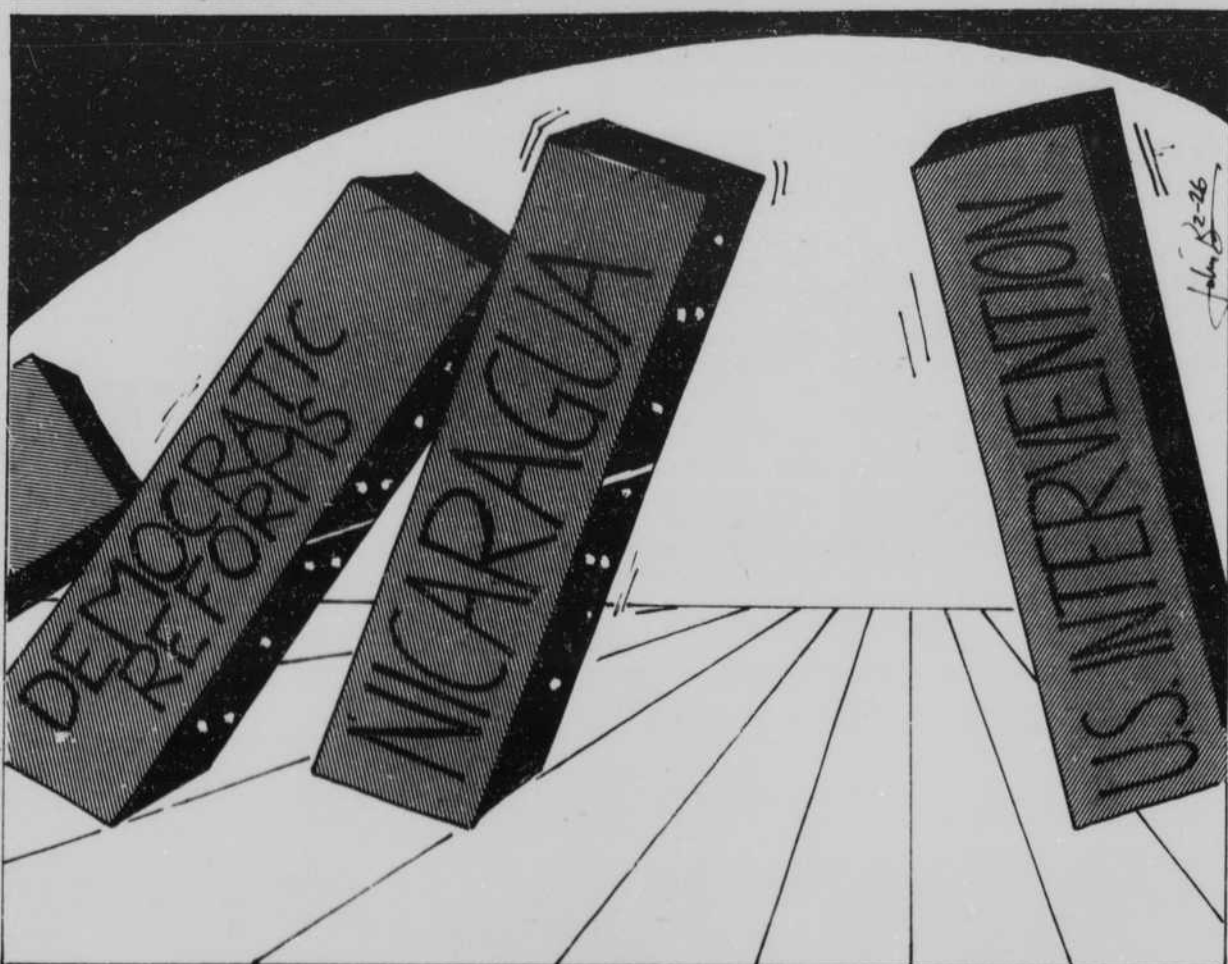
But along with infringing on the rights of Edward LeDoux, the court inadvertently has infringed on the unwritten rights of the LeDoux children.

The ruling restricts the free flow of religious input to the children. Any restriction on an individual's opportunity to learn and evaluate the varieties of religious experience should, ideally, come solely from the individual. Less ideally, those restriction should come from family members, and least ideally of all, from the state.

Bombardment with conflicting ideologies is innately "injurious" in the short run. However, the psychological turmoil -- the injury -- associated with questions of faith can serve, in the long run, only to strengthen that faith or the quality and relevance of the subsequent synthesis.

Blinders keep the horse from distraction, but they also keep the horse from reality. The court's ruling is both unconstitutional and immoral.

Bob Nelson for the Daily Nebraskan



Reagan commits political suicide

Chance to appear on Mount Rushmore, become God lost forever

Ronald Reagan always has had to try really hard to get any sympathy from me. He did it nine years ago by getting himself shot. He did it last week by shooting himself.

You've probably heard the term "political suicide." It's when a politician says or does something that either enrages the public or makes it doubtful of his or her competence. Such an action makes a politician virtually unelectable.

Ronald Reagan spent eight years as president of the greatest nation on earth. One might assume, therefore, that he has no future ambitions, despite his desire to eliminate the maximum term of eight years. But I've always had the suspicion that Ronald Reagan was running for God. Certainly, then, his campaigning doesn't end upon leaving the White House for the ranch house.

During his presidency, Reagan did things which, I think, he honestly believed were in the best interest of the country. You might have spit up when he successfully reduced taxes for the rich in 1981, and again in 1986, but I really believe he was doing it because he thought it would stimulate investment and therefore jobs. Never mind that what it stimulated was the national debt; it's the thought that counts.

But I don't believe that Reagan's motives were entirely altruistic. Yes, he wanted to improve America, but I think that desire came more from resume-padding, as they say in ASUN, than from anything else. Reagan wants that all-elusive prize -- the Academy Award for Best President.

Last week, Reagan missed his cue. In case you haven't heard it already, let me read you a little excerpt from the script of Reagan's testimony -- now on videocassette -- in John Poindexter's Iran-Contra trial. The text comes from an Associated Press story Friday.

"Is this the first time... that you came to realize in fact that a diver-

sion had actually occurred?" asked (Prosecutor Dan) Webb.

"Yes," replied Reagan. Webb asked whether Reagan expected Poindexter to report such a diversion to his boss.

"Yes," replied Reagan. "Unless maybe he thought he was protecting me from something."

At that point Reagan seemed to lose his train of thought, saying, "But,



Brandon Loomis

no, I don't understand. This is very confusing to me about this."

That does it. Reagan will never appear on Mount Rushmore.

Last summer, some idiot, probably paid by Reagan, started a group to get Reagan's face carved into that majestic and inspiring rock. I never really believed it could happen, but the suggestion was sufficient to put the fear of Reagan in me. Just a little more uncertainty would have prompted me to make one last trip to South Dakota.

I don't mean to suggest that Reagan is the worst president who ever lived. History, or time, distorts reality. For all I know, Millard Fillmore might have abused congressional pages. I simply don't know.

But of the era I have lived through -- LBJ through GHWB -- Reagan gets none of my Oscar votes. And if we want to compare him with the faces in the Black Hills, or at least what history tells us of them, we're comparing apples and vanilla beans.

But let us compare. We'll use great quotes as the standard.

We'll first consider our first president, George Washington: "I cannot tell a lie." A pretty lofty claim, indeed, but it's catchy. We learned that

quote in kindergarten and -- we hope -- it has a profound effect on our lives.

Abraham Lincoln. Many consider him to be the greatest of all time. I'm of the school that believes Abe freed the slaves for reasons not hinging entirely on humanitarian concerns, but I would be the last to question the intellect, integrity or greatness of the man. "Four score and seven years ago, our ancestors blah blah blah." We learn that one a few years further into our educations, and it makes us feel good to be in America, the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Teddy Roosevelt: "Walk softly and carry a big stick." I only agree with half of that quote, but boy is it catchy! I think it's my favorite quote. It's easy to paraphrase.

Thomas Jefferson: "That government is best which governs least."

Ronald Reagan: "But, no, I don't understand. This is very confusing to me about this."

Perhaps it will catch on, or maybe I'm just too crass to sense the beauty of such a philosophy, but I don't ever want to see those words etched in the walls behind the Reagan Memorial in Washington.

To be fair to Reagan, that isn't the only quote that has been attributed to him, just the most typical. He said things like, "We will begin bombing in five minutes" about the Soviet Union, and told us that if we were worried about the eroding ozone layer we should wear bonnets. It's hard to decide which is the most fitting epithet.

Reagan has committed political suicide -- he will never be God. He will never be on Mount Rushmore. For these things, I thank him. Then again, maybe if Reagan's face were on that mountain, the area would return from the depths of the tourism hell that it has become to beautiful, billboard-free Black Hills. Only history will tell.

Loomis is a senior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan wire editor and an editorial columnist.

Column offers quips, not facts

Henry Battistoni gets half-inch headlines and a respectable position on Page 4. Is this supposed to be commensurate with the value of what he writes? Can I be on Page 1?

"Staying the course carelessly brought us here," Battistoni wrote concerning the Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Compact (DN, Feb. 22). Staying what course? You're not making sense, Battistoni. "Turning back solves nothing." It doesn't? Never turned back to correct an error, did you? I'm sure glad I don't know you personally.

It seems you are aware, Henry, that state Sen. Jim McFarland did introduce legislation withdrawing Nebraska from that compact, but it is also evident that you didn't pay much attention to it. You neglected to list the sub-choice under your "second option" (wherein Nebraska withdraws from the compact) that Nebraska can contract with another state, as New York has done, to take our radioactive waste -- withdrawal from the

compact does not necessarily mean that we would still have to radiate our neighbors in Boyd County.

Nothing would do more to motivate Nebraska to limit its waste production than being responsible solely for its own.

Let me guess, Henry -- you're a Republican? You tried to defend Gov. Orr by saying, "(She) correctly has taken exception to our weak position." What she said to Lowell Fischer (published in the Lincoln Star recently) was that there was "nothing I could do." That's quite right, you know -- there is nothing she can do WITHOUT OFFENDING HER SUPPORTERS.

I have no use for a governor who cares more for her supporters' interest than for the people of the state, nor for a columnist who writes more foolishness than fact and offers quips instead of clarity.

Fran Thompson sophomore sociology

letter POLICY

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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.

Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Letters should be typewritten.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

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