

Daily Nebraskan

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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Divestment needed

Ties with racists, though, aren't needed

Monday, African National Congress representative Shuping Coapoge urged students to pressure the university to drop its ties with companies that do business in South Africa.

Those of us who are concerned about the actions of our community should follow his advice.

Last week, NU Foundation President Terry Fairfield said the foundation has some minor South African investments with no plans to divest them.

Students who are serious about the cultural pluralism touted on this campus should take offense at Fairfield's and the foundation's stance.

Investing in corporations that play under South Africa's rules is lending consent to the practices of the South African government. Those practices -- while there recently has been much talk to the contrary -- still tightly adhere to policies of apartheid.

And a university -- especially one that screams so loudly against racism -- is no place for ties with a racist government.

At face, we cannot stop corporations from doing business in South Africa. After all, companies that continue to concern themselves with South Africa are doing so to make money, choosing to ignore the problems they help to foster.

We can, however, cut our ties with those corporations to show that we will not tolerate either apartheid or condoning apartheid. Through that means, with time, those corporate executives may realize the flaws in their South African business practices.

But unless people begin the process in their own communities, that message never will get through.

While we gather against racial discrimination on our own campus, we are, in effect, supporting the most blatant form of racial discrimination in the world today.

Only by forcing our own leaders to divest from those interests can we honestly say that we are concerned about the struggle toward cultural pluralism.

-- Amy Edwards
for the Daily Nebraskan



Restructuring bill compromised

Legislature's knee-jerk reactions leave important issues hanging

The 91st Nebraska Legislature recently completed its second session, which could have gone down as the most unproductive gathering of lawmakers in history.

Instead, senators tried to redeem themselves at the close of the session by passing several important pieces of legislation, including LB1141, which will create a stronger Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education if Nebraska voters approve.

Although the bill appears to be a step forward in improving the coordination of higher education in Nebraska, it is nowhere near the improvement proposed by another piece of legislation, LR239CA, which wasn't approved.

LR239CA would have created a board of trustees for each of seven higher education institutions in Nebraska, including the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. It also would have replaced the existing NU Board of Regents and the State College Board of Trustees with a single board of regents for all seven institutions.

I attended the meeting last fall where the basis for the restructuring proposal in LR239CA was suggested by the Chicago-based consulting firm Widmayer and Associates. The consultants' report was the result of a lengthy study conducted by the firm as called for by the Legislature.

The request for a study of Nebraska higher education was called for in legislation that was supposed to add Kearney State College to the University of Nebraska system.

I went to last fall's meeting expecting Widmayer and Associates to explain why or why not KSC should become part of NU. Instead, the consultants shed light on something entirely new for Nebraska higher education -- there is a difference between coordination and governance, and those different duties should be taken care of by different entities.

The separation dealt with one aspect in particular: budget control. The consultants said a coordinating board should have no direct authority over budget. Budget is something that should be reserved for a governing board.

There was almost no mention of KSC in the consultants' report. But if Nebraska higher education were restructured as the consultants suggested, there would have been no NU system for KSC to join. All seven of the largest Nebraska institutions would have been in the same coordinating system.

The immediate reaction to the

consultants' study on the day of its release was less than enthusiastic, to say the least. There were a lot of astonished looks, shaken heads and "we'll take a look at it's."

And as I sat there thinking what a great concept the separation of coordination and governance was, I also thought to myself, "The Legislature will never go for it." A few days later, my instincts seemed wrong, as some senators gave initial support to the idea.

Later, legislation was introduced and debate ensued over the proposed

dents an official vote on the board. Finally, there was hope of the representation students had fought for and deserved. My support grew stronger than ever.

Amendments were added to the restructuring proposal, including one to reduce the number of trustee board members to five and one to add a voting student member. But there still were complaints, the loudest of which came from the regents, who didn't like the proposal for the new board of regents to have no real budgetary power.

The end of the session drew nearer, and the Legislature couldn't get away from abortion bills. It looked like the restructuring proposal was doomed.

Until the final day. After bargaining with unhappy regents, a compromise was reached in LB1141, and everyone seemed to be happy with getting a little of what they wanted.

Except me.

Where, in all the mess of amendments and compromises, had the ideal of separation of coordination and governance gone? Where was the official vote for students? What happened to the Kearney State issue?

LB1141 gives more power to the coordinating commission and takes some away from the regents. But each group would have some budgetary power, a failure of the coordination vs. governance ideal.

And there is no mention of a voting student commission member or regent, or what to do with KSC in LB1141.

It seems to me that the result of all this compromise is nothing more than a knee-jerk reaction to the end of session deadline. In an effort to get something, anything accomplished, legislators gave up on the important issues. Once again, politics prevails over progress.

Senators were unable to initiate what could have been a positive change in Nebraska higher education. Now, separation of coordination and governance seems dead, the official student vote issue seems lost, and the addition of KSC to NU still is up in the air.

It's a shame that a year's worth of work had to be scrapped in its most crucial moments. It's a bigger shame that Nebraska legislators were willing to compromise the most important elements of the restructuring plan just to get something done.

Pedersen is a sophomore advertising major and a Daily Nebraskan night news editor and columnist.

opinion READER

Sale of Pro-Choice T-shirts provokes student's response

I would like to respond to Bruce A Gregg's letter to the editor (DN, April 13). As a devout Episcopalian and a Wesleyan alumni (the class of 1989), I feel with respect that Mr. Gregg is right in protesting that the T-shirts do indeed offend some Catholics and other Protestants like me. However, I would like to point out that freedom of speech is a fundamental right we exercise in our daily lives, no matter what college we are in. What Mr. Gregg said about being a Christian and as a firm believer in civil rights moved me a lot. I do believe in civil rights as a cause to change the world in the 1990s. I had an interesting talk with a friend the other day. We discussed the question, "Why are the 1990s different?" My friend said that the reason for this is that the world is changing so much and it affects everything. Yes, we are going through a tough time of searching for the Truth. We all feel that the selling of T-shirts poses a question of whether social conscientiousness causes it to be valid or invalid.

Perhaps Mr. Gregg is very careful in not spreading his beliefs to the people. Truth is very significant in discussions with others in order to solve the dilemma. I know abortion is a difficult topic we tend to avoid ourselves, but the Students for Choice is sometimes insensitive to others' beliefs and values by satirizing His Holiness Pope John Paul II in a demeaning way. What if the Archbishop of Canterbury, the spiritual leader of three million Anglicans around the world, sees his image on the T-shirt

made by the same group? Yes, His Grace would feel really offended by it and demand an official apology from the group. The Students for Choice needs to learn that it must use Truth in dealing with what it wants to say to the university students. Free speech helps us to organize our feelings and opinions in a mature and responsible manner so others can respect it in the near future.

Let me return to the question of whether the issue of selling the T-shirts is valid or invalid. I would say that the issue merits a valid matter because it is indeed protected by the First Amendment. No matter how my Christian and non-Christian friends feel about the selling of T-shirts, the First Amendment is a cornerstone in shaping the values and beliefs our nation instills in our children and grandchildren. The valid matter cannot hurt our feelings toward others who disagree with the ideals we believe in. The true reason is that we will always love each other despite our differences, according to the Holy Bible. I do like my dear friends, both at the university and at Nebraska Wesleyan University, for what they are, and I admire them for their wonderful ideals and values they teach me to accept.

I pray that my letter will inspire many friends and others to look beyond in their later lives. Thank you very much.

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