

# GULF

u p d a t e

## Supporters will reintroduce designation next year House kills Niobrara River bill

### Marines board Iraqi vessel

The world's response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait involved confrontation and conciliation on Sunday, with U.S. Marines boarding an Iraqi vessel and Soviet diplomatic renewing efforts to find a resolution.

Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev arrived in Paris for talks with French President Francois Mitterrand on matters including the nearly 3-month-old Persian Gulf crisis. A Gorbachev envoy, meanwhile, held talks in Baghdad with Saddam Hussein.

In Iraq, 301 French nationals were told they had to wait another day for freedom. The Baghdad government said last week that they could return home, but the trip was delayed from Sunday until today.

Diplomatic sources said the departure was put off because 26 other French citizens were unaccounted for.

European Community leaders, holding a summit in Rome, pledged Sunday not to send official representatives to win the freedom of hostages, and to discourage private missions.

In a joint statement, the leaders assailed the "unscrupulous" use of hostages in the "vain attempt to divide the international community."

In the latest naval confrontation, U.S. Marines boarded an Iraqi tanker after an Australian vessel and a U.S. warship fired warning shots across its bow when it refused to stop, U.S. Navy officials said.

The ship, intercepted in the North Arabian Sea, was allowed to proceed after a search party found no goods banned under the U.N. sanctions.

As of Oct. 26, some 2,738 ships had been intercepted in the Gulf region, and 282 ships boarded.

The U.S. House early Sunday killed the controversial Niobrara River scenic designation bill on the last recorded vote of the year as foes of the measure continued to criticize it in Nebraska.

The measure passed the Senate in a voice vote late Saturday. In the House, the bill got 62 percent of the vote but needed a two-thirds majority because it was brought up under suspension of House rules.

The House vote was 157-95. It needed 11 more votes in favor to pass.

The bill would have extended federal protection to a 76-mile stretch of the Niobrara River east of Valentine.

The Senate version of the bill was sponsored by Sen. Jim Exon.

Rep. Doug Bereuter, a supporter of the bill, blamed its defeat in the House on a sympathy vote for his retiring colleague, Rep. Virginia Smith.

She was the only Nebraska member of Congress opposed to the bill.

"On the very last recorded vote of the 101st Congress, she was not going to be denied a sympathy vote," Bereuter said from Washington.

"I am extremely pleased that rea-

son and fairness triumphed over an unprecedented and irresponsible piece of legislation," Smith said after the vote.

"It is fitting that the last recorded vote of the 101st Congress and of my career represented such a great victory for my constituents and indeed for the overwhelming majority of Nebraskans who oppose this designation," she said.

Rep. Peter Hoagland has said supporters will reintroduce the bill next year.

Details of the compromise legislation were unveiled Oct. 19 by Exon, Sen. Bob Kerrey, Bereuter and Hoagland.

Much of the river lies in Smith's 3rd District. She said she could not support the plan because it requested immediate designation, rather than the study she said landowners want.

Smith asked that a yearlong study be conducted as to whether the Niobrara should be designated a scenic river.

Under the compromise plan, the federal government would have provided technical expertise for protecting the river, but would have been

limited to 5 percent of river frontage in acquiring land or scenic easements.

In Omaha on Saturday, opponents of the designation said the federal government would condemn land along the river and eject landowners if the designation takes place.

The National Park Service and sponsors of the measure have said the government has rarely used its power of condemnation to control land along such rivers.

Michael Pisansky of New Brighton, Minn., spoke at a meeting of the Nebraska Water Resources Association in Omaha. Pisansky owns land along southeastern Minnesota's St. Croix River, which was designated in 1968 as part of the national system.

He said the Park Service has sued him to obtain a scenic easement that would allow him to keep his land but would restrict its uses. An easement is not the same as a condemnation. In a condemnation, the government acquires the land.

The Nebraska Water Resources Association is a group dedicated to managing the state's waterways and to water conservation and economic development.

## Former member sues church over announcement

Disciplinary practices of a Lincoln church will be at issue today when the trial of a lawsuit filed nearly three years ago by a former church member begins in Lancaster County District Court.

In January 1988, Beth L. Hald, 29, sued Indian Hills Community Church and its officials, saying they were negligent in announcing to the congregation that her conduct was immoral. She had confided to a church counselor that she was involved in a homosexual relationship.

Hald, who claims she was told information exchanged at counseling sessions would remain confidential, is seeking an unspecified amount of

general damages. She says that she has been publicly humiliated and shunned by friends, has lost faith in God and has suffered permanent psychiatric injury.

Herb Friedman, Hald's attorney, said this is the first time such a case has been tried in Nebraska. Though constitutional protections of religion have been tested before, it has not been in this context.

"This particular case deals with a religious body's right to violate confidentiality promises under the guise that the Bible told them to do this," Friedman said.

Church officials say their disciplinary actions against Hald are part of

their religious beliefs and are therefore protected by the U.S. and state constitutions.

Donald Witt, the attorney representing the church and its officials, declined to comment on the case.

Named as defendants in the suit are the church, presiding minister Gil Rugh, principal counseling minister Virgil Ediger, counselor Frenchy Dennis and the board of elders at the time the lawsuit was filed.

According to the lawsuit, in late 1986 Hald went to Dennis regarding a drug addiction problem. During counseling she confided to Dennis about her sexual habits and lifestyle. Hald

also confided in Gordon Opp, a member of the board of elders.

In February 1987, Dennis and Opp ordered Hald to change her lifestyle, saying they would make her confidences public if she did not, the lawsuit contends. Hald said she subsequently resigned from the church.

On March 1, 1987, before about 700 people, Rugh announced from the pulpit that Hald was engaging in immoral conduct and sinful activities, though he did not specifically talk about a homosexual relationship.

The jury trial is expected to last five to seven days and jury selection could take up to two days.

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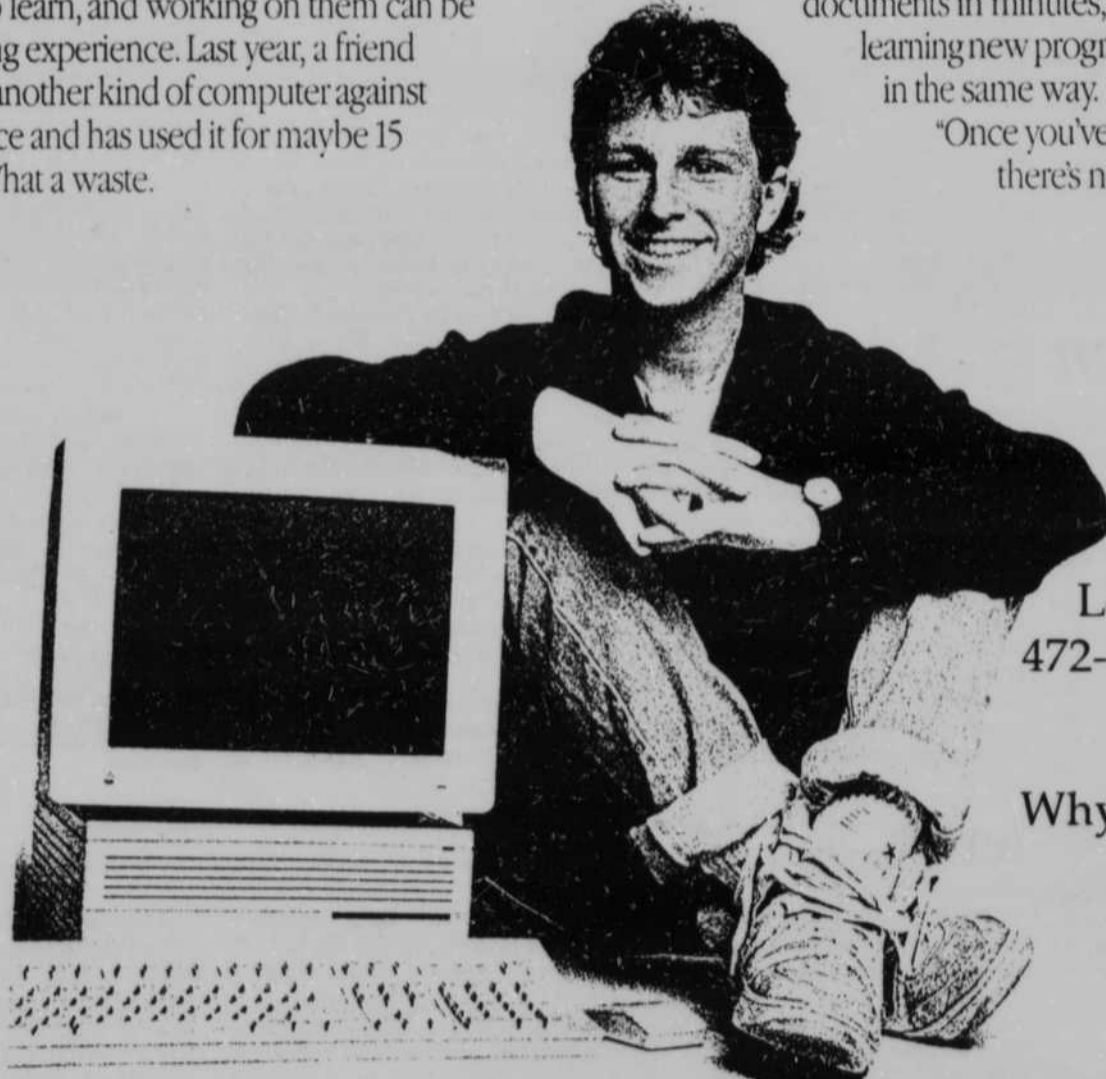
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