

Honor King

His cause must continue

A poster distributed last week on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus urged students to celebrate the birthday of a real American hero — Robert E. Lee.

In many aspects, Lee deserves such admiration. He led his country with dignity and honor. He was the best of the antebellum South.

But in the soul of Lee and his Confederacy is the specter of slavery — inseparable and intolerable — committing both Lee and his nation righteously to the trashheap of history.

Case in point is the poster distributed last week. The poster did not ask only for the celebration of Lee's birthday, but called for good Americans to honor Lee instead of Martin Luther King Jr.

Or, as the poster called him: "Martin Lucifer Coon."

The poster was published on stationery of the Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

To be sure, the KKK is easy editorial fodder — like shooting hicks in a barrel.

But the few members of the Klan only manifest sentiment that, in various degrees, festers deep in the psyche of white America.

And for that reason, King's birthday is celebrated today — not only to honor him, but as a tool to root out the disease of hatred and intolerance he battled with love.

Lee and the Confederacy can be committed to the history books only if King and his cause continue to live on in this and every day of the year. Happy birthday, M.L.K., and may the Civil War South never rise again.

—B.N.

Inequality

Regents have chance to right wrongs

In June, the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women released a report criticizing the lack of opportunities for women faculty members at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In November, one of UNL's top professors, Susan Welch, announced she would leave the university to seek professional advancement elsewhere, as dean of Penn State University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Now, finally, it appears University of Nebraska leaders are planning to do something about the problem. Members of the NU Board of Regents agreed to meet within the next three months to take action.

When they meet, the regents will have to deal with a slew of inequities between men and women faculty at UNL, according to the commission report:

- Only 16 percent of faculty members are women.
- Women's average salaries are \$600 lower than their male counterparts' wages.
- Only two UNL colleges are hiring women at a rate proportional to the available pool.

Welch said she would leave because of the lack of advancement for women. Before additional professors leave — or others decide not to apply to UNL in the first place — the university needs to take action to correct the discrepancies.

At their special meeting, the regents have the opportunity to right some of the wrongs. If they take positive action, making specific changes, the university is headed in the right direction.

Already in September, NU President Martin Massengale, then UNL chancellor, began exit interviews because of the high turnover rate to learn why women faculty members were leaving.

Now the university needs to start listening to women before they decide to leave.

—E.F.P.

U.S. position questionable

Hello, everyone, and welcome back to classes. Whether you realize it or not, you are some of the lucky ones. Many college students at UNL and all over this country and the world can only look forward to classes on how to survive chemical warfare and dodging bullets in the sand. Chemistry and French don't seem so bad now, do they?

They use slogans like: "It's not just a job, it's an adventure!" Yes, and what an adventure my brother and many of my friends are having. I'm sure scorpions, scorching heat (and freezing nights) and care packages from a family thousands of miles away are everyone's idea of a time full of adventure. And for what? There seem to be many answers to this question. Greed for cheap oil. Restoring Kuwait's ruling family. And the best one of all, teaching Saddam Hussein a lesson. Yes, Saddam is wrong in in-

vading Kuwait and yes, he should be made accountable for his actions, but should the United States be the one to do it and is that the reason President Bush has sent our loved ones to Saudi Arabia?

Since my brother departed from his base in Germany a week before Christmas, we haven't been in contact with him. I don't know his thoughts on this future war, except for his fear of the unknown. And mine.

Ask yourself why the U.S. is in this position. Question the authority figures in our country and their actions. Don't let the death of a loved one or any more soldiers, for that matter, start the thinking process. It starts with you. Don't let it end there.

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ERIC PFANNER

Flag blankets reasons for war

"No flag-burners here," reads a banner at the National Hockey League All-Star Game in Chicago.

"This is what it's all about," says a U.S. soldier in the Saudi Arabian desert, pointing to the American flag.

In San Francisco, anti-war protesters display flags with peace signs in place of the stars.

Never mind that this war has nothing to do with the flag. Depending on whom you believe, it's about "naked aggression" or oil. Either way, it's not about the hallowed Stars and Stripes. Americans aren't fighting for their homes, their families or the liberties and freedoms that the American flag represents. Whether the war is right or wrong, it should be fought under the Kuwaiti and Saudi flags.

Saddam Hussein wants to carry the flag of Islam. He wants to make this a holy war. Iraqis will kill Americans in the name of religion.

We, on the other hand, have religious plurality. But on the home front and in the trenches, we have our own holy war. We worship the flag.

War, like religion, is black and white. There are no gray areas between believing fervently and not believing. To kill someone, you have to be 100 percent sure you are doing the right thing.

When the purposes for war are clouded, as they are in this case, those who support the killing need something to rally behind. When the flag is waving everywhere, it's not hard to find that cause.

The flag, of course, goes hand-in-hand with patriotism. Not peacetime patriotism, the healthy pride in a nation's accomplishments in science, art or sports, but wartime patriotism. Nationalism.

A nation needs single-minded resolve to go to war and win. In a democracy like ours, that unanimity of purpose is difficult to come by, except when our existence as a democracy is threatened. The United



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States learned that lesson in Vietnam.

But, like fresh army crew cuts, war breeds homogeneous ideas. Once fighting breaks out, until the horrors hit home, most people think alike. They stand up and cheer at a hockey game. They cheer a little louder than usual because the home team is a little bigger and more powerful than usual.

Senators, as they did after the U.S. attack, pass unanimous resolutions in support of our troops — a wishy-washy way of saying they support the war.

Until the war started, some of the most outspoken opponents of attacking Iraq were senators such as George Mitchell and Bob Kerrey. When the United States went to war, they joined the crowd at the hockey rink.

Now everyone — except for a few throwbacks to the '60s — is getting behind the war. Opinion polls show that about 80 percent support President Bush's actions.

LETTER POLICY

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Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the NU Board of Regents, who established the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Publications Board to

The heretics, those who protest this holy war, don't really have a cause yet. Many look and act like they are reliving Vietnam. Their response has been as predictable and homogeneous as the flag wavers' reaction.

But to avoid the counterculture image of Vietnam-era protesters, the new opposition is using a mainstream message: We support the troops, we just don't support the war.

That watered-down message will weaken the peace movement. It's impossible to oppose the war and support those who do the killing. Love beads don't go with army fatigues.

Activists say they support the troops because they want them to come home alive. The only way for them to come home alive is if there is no war. If there is no war, there is no need for soldiers. But that's too idealistic. Clearly, we can't just get rid of all the soldiers and throw away their weapons. In our world, there still is naked aggression and oil. There are dictators, terrorism and imperialism. Once in a while, there's even a war that's justified.

And unfortunately, when there are so many possible reasons for war, or when we can't find a reason, we still have patriotism. And we use the flag as cover.

Hiding behind it, we avoid real discussion of the war. And that's unfortunate; discussion, after all, is the reason we live in a pluralist society. If we can't allow a diversity of opinions on the war, we refuse to admit that we are fighting for many complex reasons.

As Samuel Johnson said, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

By simplifying the war into a spree of flag waving, we all become Johnson's scoundrels, or their 20th century equivalents — simpletons. We must not let that happen. We must not make this a holy war.

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