

Let's get on with it

Coordinating Commission issue, not regents

In November, Nebraska voters said with a constitutional amendment that they wanted to create an additional level of governance in the state's higher education system.

Around the same time, the University of Nebraska's elected governing body, the NU Board of Regents, hired a new president. The board came under fire for its handling of the situation.

As state Sen. Eric Will of Omaha said, "You'd have to live under a rock in the Sandhills someplace not to know of the controversy that exists."

Most Nebraska voters were not hiding in the Sandhills. They were registering their anger over the regents' handling of the presidency. And in newspaper polls, they indicated by overwhelming margins that they wanted the regents to remain elected — and therefore accountable.

Voters should have that right.

A resolution introduced in the Legislature by Will would take that right away. His LR6 calls for the regents to be appointed by the governor. Their terms would be shortened from six to four years.

In theory, Will's idea is not a bad one. He points out that in many other states, the governing bodies for higher education are appointed, not elected. Popularly elected officials are not necessarily experts in their fields, as the performance of some NU regents proves.

But the constitutional amendment for a new and improved coordinating commission also calls for appointed officials. If the regents were appointed, they would become merely a second level of bureaucracy, enforcing the decisions of other appointed officials.

Ideally, perhaps, members of the coordinating commission would be elected, because under the amendment, they will become the policymaking board. Regents, the day-to-day supervisors of university governance, could then be appointed.

But the one ballot issue took long enough. The coordinating commission still won't have its duties assigned until the Legislature passes an implementing bill. The impetus for change began two years ago, when an in-depth study of higher education was authorized.

It's time for senators to get on with the business at hand — the implementation bill for the coordinating commission.

That bill, LB663, would give the commission the power to review the budgets and programs of Nebraska's universities and state and community colleges.

Whether that function is called "coordination" or "governance" is not the issue. Nebraska voters decided that they wanted the commission to be an intermediary between the Legislature and the institutional boards.

The Legislature needs to implement LB663; it also needs to keep some accountability in the hands of the voters.

—E.F.P.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Law responds, war or no war

It's around midnight, and for the last hour a person unknown to you has been walking around your house or business for no apparent reason. If you had been watching, would this be a "suspicious activity?" I think so.

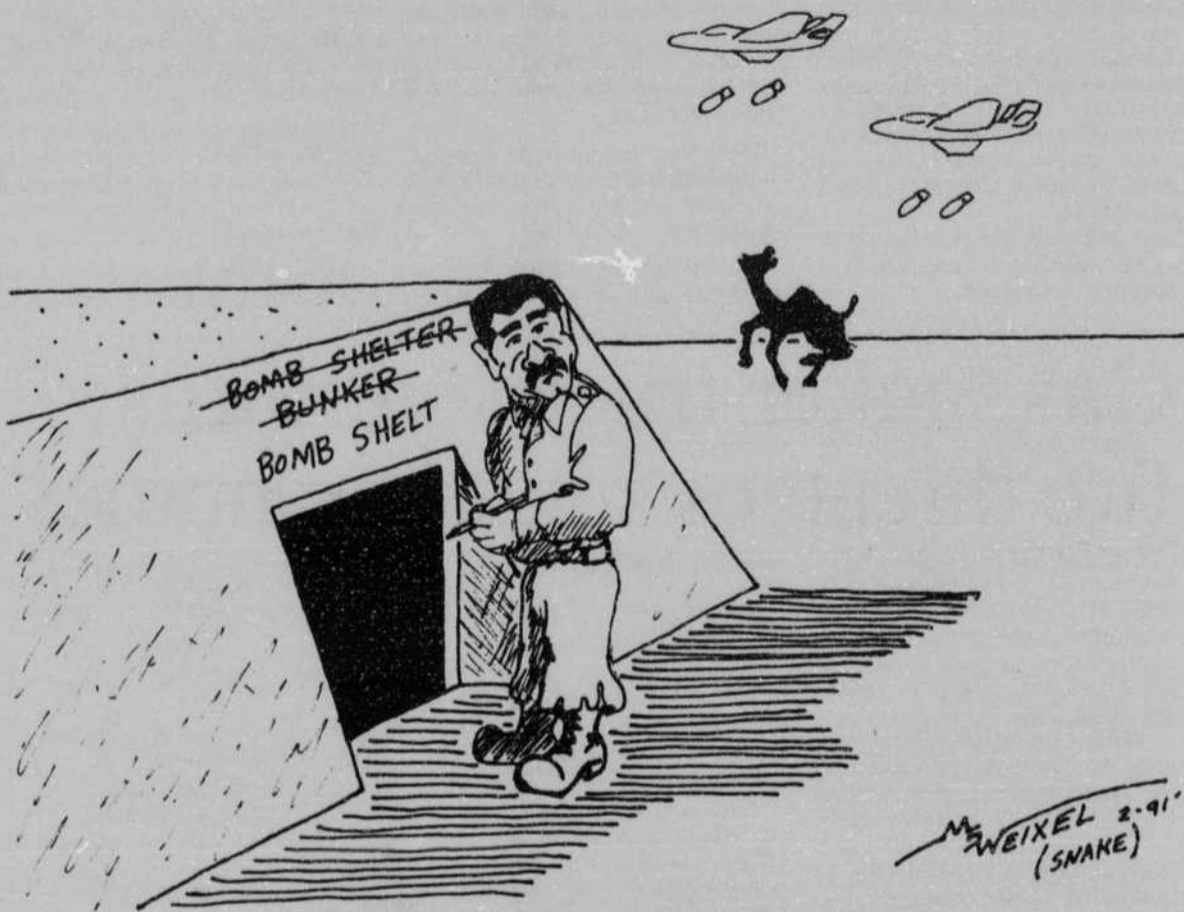
It was this type of activity observed by an UNL Police Officer that was responsible for the contact of the author of a letter titled "Terrorism suspect says country paranoid" (DN, Feb. 5). After reading that letter, I felt it important to point out some facts to the author, and others, who may share his concerns and ideas.

Officers of the UNL Police Department contact individuals nightly to check on their welfare and intentions. This type of contact did not come with the war in the Middle East nor will it end when that war does. It has been a method used by police all over the world to meet the responsibility of protecting the citizens of their communities since police officers were given that charge. One must realize there are other groups in this country and the world that were committing acts of vandalism or violence in the name of various causes many years before the war started, as well as individuals who wait for an opportunity to force themselves on unprepared or weaker members of the society. The war has not brought

this one, it merely added another dimension to an existing problem. Had the author of the letter needed help and not been contacted by an officer driving by, his letter would probably have been much different in its content.

It is not "paranoia," as stated by the author, which made the officer contact him. It was a vigilance and dedication to the job we have as police officers; providing the safest campus possible for all members and property of the university community. We will contact many more people who have reasonable explanations for their "suspicious" activities, like the author did, than we will those who have negative intentions in their minds. However, we will continue to stop and ask questions when the situation warrants it. To do less would be to shirk the responsibilities we all accept and attempt to meet when we enter the law enforcement profession. The negative comments come with the job and are accepted because we know the majority of our community is more at ease because we are out there doing our job.

K.W. Cauble
Chief of Police
University Police Department



PAT DINSLAGE

Love takes work, not romance

It's the great American love day — St. Valentine's. We're supposed to send a card or some other token to our lover.

Then, 3 1/2 months later, it's the wedding month, and we're supposed to send wedding invitations. That's a pretty fast move from sweetheart to spouse. Maybe too fast, as the divorce rate shows.

The United States is one of the few countries in which young people are allowed — or forced — to choose their own life partners, without much advice or help.

When we hear about countries in which families, parents or professional matchmakers do the choosing, we shudder. We think about the type of person our parents would pick out for us, and we shudder some more.

But those countries often have lower divorce rates than we do. Why? Is it because divorce just isn't allowed?

I think it's because the couple are not expected to be in love when they marry. How can that work?

that it's the day-to-day living that forms the bond that keeps two people together for a lifetime; that the initial "romance rush" is not solid ground on which to build a marriage.

The trouble is that, unlike other choices we make in America, such as the choices of our leaders, laws or careers, the choice of a spouse is often not an informed one.

Why do we put less planning into choosing the person with whom to share our lives than we do into choosing how we earn a living?

Why do we set higher, more concrete criteria for who will run our country than we do for the person who will mold our children?

Why do we become more interested in discovering the origins and family life of a favorite rock star than in discovering the environment in which our intended spouse grew up — the environment that has a direct effect on what he or she expects from a marriage partner?

And why do we leave the whole thing to chance, expecting love to drop out of the sky, like bird droppings, suddenly hitting us between the eyes?

I think it's because we are told the Great Lie, the myth that all we need is true love to make everything work out and live happily ever after. Our movies, literature, songs and even families tell us the Lie.

When the romantic rush slips away and reality intrudes, we blame it on



Maybe those cultures have found that it's the day-to-day living that forms the bond that keeps two people together for a lifetime; that the initial "romance rush" is not solid ground on which to build a marriage.

our husband or wife — somehow, they are not living up to their part of the bargain, giving us emotionally all we want and need. It always happens. The lucky couples work through it.

Reality hits when a quiet evening at home means he falls asleep at 9:30 and snores so loud you can't hear the television.

Reality hits when you realize she's one of those cheerful morning people, and you don't function on any level until 9 a.m. on three cups of coffee. And you realize you're not going to be able to mold him or her.

True love — or the romantic love you had when you stood at the altar — can't change reality, solve the problems or lessen the irritations involved in living with someone day after day, week after week, month after month.

True love can't get you more money or stretch further the money you've got. And when the baby arrives — which society says should be within two years or everyone begins to question potency and/or fertility — true love doesn't get the diapers changed.

The only thing this kind of romantic love does is give us the courage to

get married in the first place. From there on in, if we made a good choice of a partner, and our expectations of that person aren't too high, we begin to learn real love.

How do we avoid this reality intrusion? How do we stay married to someone who is not the god or goddess we thought they were? Do we want to?

What is it that our parents, grandparents or other long-married couples know that keeps them together? What's the secret?

I think the secret is that they worked at it. They talked when they needed to, whether they wanted to or not. They listened to and laughed at the same tired jokes hundreds of times. They fought fair. They encouraged each other to grow and change, then accepted those changes. They did not expect each other to fill all needs, wants and desires all the time.

Most of all, I think they made the decision to stay together over and over. They stay married because they want to be with each other, not because some piece of paper said they owned each other or had to stay. They worked to build something between them that would not disappear during tough times.

No one tells the prospective bride and groom that the real work is just beginning when they get married and that each of them has to decide, every day of their marriage, whether the work is worth it.

When two people stand at the altar, they have no idea what's involved in succeeding in a long-term relationship because they haven't had one before.

Rather than viewing marriage as "living happily ever after," the couple must view marriage as a commitment to try — to work harder at this than they have worked at anything before. The effort involved in achieving career success pales in comparison to the work needed to achieve marital success.

Maybe America, which is based on the family, is afraid that if our young couples are convinced of how much work marriage is, they will decide not to get married and the American family unit will disappear.

The family won't vanish if couples are told the truth. Maybe there won't be as many June weddings. But maybe there won't be as many divorces, either.

Dinslage is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan night news editor and columnist.