

Motorcycle bill

Let those who ride wear helmets

Another motorcycle helmet bill has reared its exposed head in the Nebraska Legislature, this time attempting to limit the present helmet law to those 18 and younger.

Sen. Scott Moore of Seward sponsored LB252, which was supported heavily in the Legislature's Transportation Committee Tuesday by those who ride but can't decide under the current helmet law, according to The Lincoln Star.

During the hearing, Terry Schulz, president of the state Motorcyclists' Coalition, said the bill would help eliminate the inconvenience and expense of the mandatory helmet law.

But Schulz didn't mention the inconvenience and expense to non-motorcycle riders who must care for Schulz and others after they crack open their unprotected heads.

Dr. James Manion, an assistant professor at Creighton University Medical School, put it best:

"While the opposition cries freedom of choice, I think about brain-dead people who can't add two plus two."

George Miles, a motorcyclist for 20 years, cited the Nebraska motorcycle death toll as proof that helmet laws don't work. He said that from 1988 to 1989, the number of deaths from accidents in Nebraska increased 2.2 percent.

He didn't mention the number of people whose injuries were greatly reduced by helmets, or those who received no injury at all because of a helmet.

In a study of motorcycle accident victims in Nebraska hospitals, Dr. Robert Muelleman of the University of Nebraska Medical Center found that the accident rate decreased nearly 40 percent since the enactment of the mandatory helmet law.

Because most injuries involve people over age 18, Muelleman said, Moore's bill would negate "90 percent of the benefit" of the present law.

Doctors have proved that letting those who ride decide endangers lives. LB252 should be ignored.

Campaign no fun

But it's still better than dirty pool

For most University of Nebraska-Lincoln students, the only enjoyment in the yearly ASUN elections is the onslaught of negative campaigning — or, as they call it in the ring, mudslinging.

Last year, a record number of students turned out to vote in an election full of all those juicy things one finds in soap operas and playgrounds.

But UNITY presidential candidate Andy Massey said Wednesday that he wanted to put an end to all the dirty pool. It hurts the credibility of ASUN, he said.

Massey's statement was referring to posters displayed on campus Monday night advertising the CHANGE party. The posters were in violation of election rules because they were posted early.

But CHANGE probably was not responsible for the posters, all the presidential candidates said. "There were," an ENERGY candidate said, "too many blatant violations."

So instead of slinging mud at CHANGE for alleged campaign violations, UNITY and ENERGY chose instead to doubt that CHANGE was responsible for the violation.

Who put up the posters? Maybe UNITY and ENERGY are protecting themselves from accusations that they planted the fake posters.

Or maybe, more likely, it's a new move in ASUN politics. UNITY and ENERGY look good for not jumping to conclusions, and CHANGE looks good for not violating the rules. That's positive campaigning.

The mudslinging so common in ASUN elections does, as Massey said, undermine the credibility of our student government. So far, it looks like this year may not be much fun. But the Daily Nebraskan wholeheartedly supports boredom.

—B.N.

ASUN has no room for bias

The ASUN Appointments Board holds a great deal of power, more than students realize. This three-member board has the power to appoint persons to various committees and positions in and around ASUN. One of its responsibilities is to appoint people to fill vacancies on the senate. There is currently a vacancy for representation of the Teachers College. It has come to my attention that a former senator has applied for this position.

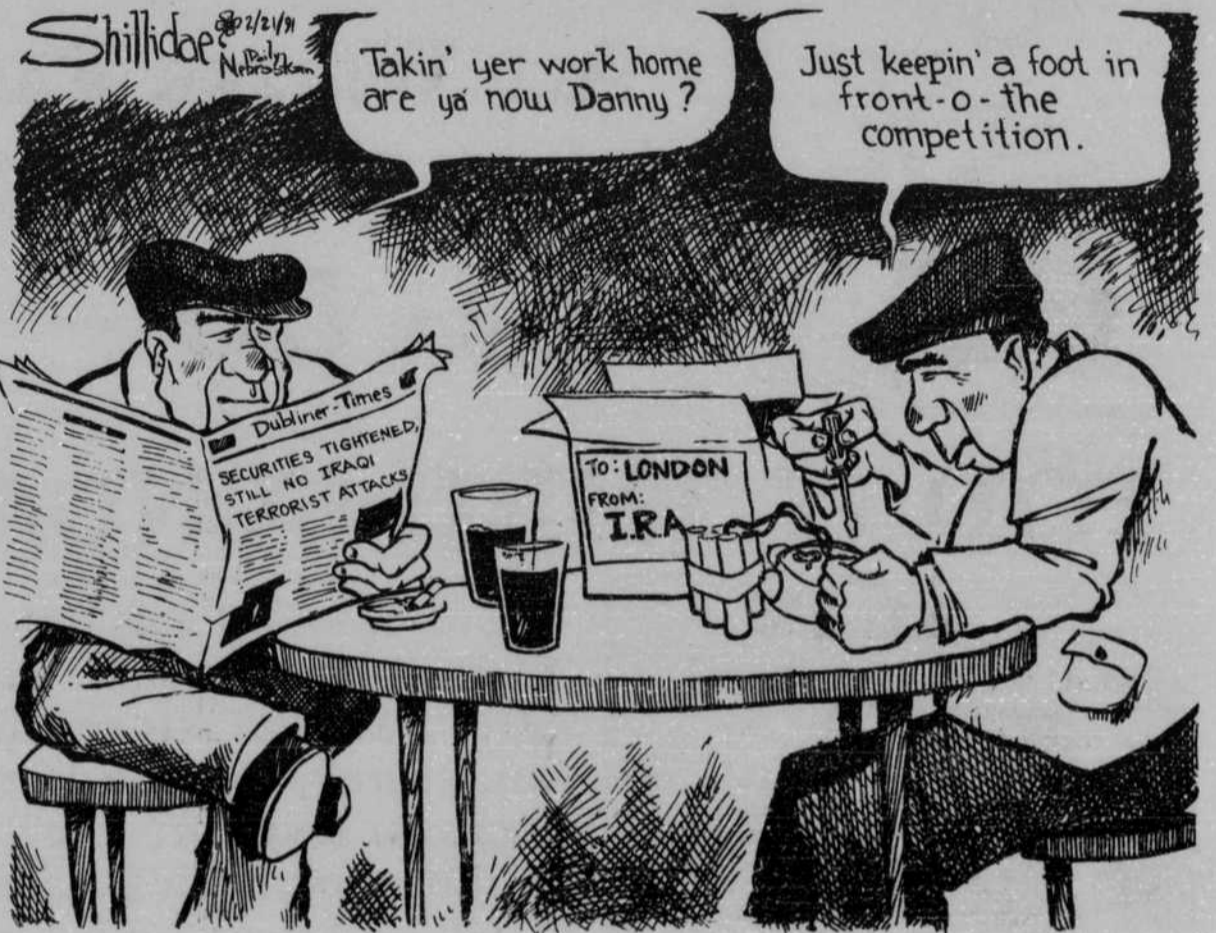
Steve Thomlison, while serving on the senate in the past, was known for making insensitive, off-the-cuff, and derogatory statements and comments concerning racial groups and students with beliefs different than his own. Many of those statements were made publicly and were quoted

in the Daily Nebraskan on several occasions.

In the year and a half that I have been at this university as a non-traditional student, I have seen a change in the attitudes toward cultural diversity and tolerance. This change has been quite positive. This change has been slow, but progressing nonetheless. A recent dramatic example of this is the creation by ASUN of standing committees that address cultural diversity and tolerance issues.

Therefore, I urge the members of the Appointments Board to scrutinize the applications; there are other applicants who are highly qualified for this vacancy.

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WALTER GHOLSON

'Good Life' includes hate mail

A few weeks ago, one of my classmates asked me to write something about a problem she had on campus. She said she was not sleeping well and was experiencing some depression as a result. She was thinking that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was not the place to continue her education.

I thought her problem was related to low test scores or the usual homesickness students encounter. But then I realized she was a senior scheduled to graduate soon. So what was her problem?

She had received her first hate letter, complete with the usual blatantly racist messages. I instantly understood the stress and trauma she was going through.

Sometimes it's hard to admit that you're hurting inside and not quite up to competition and scholarship.

Just before my initial visit to Lincoln from Washington, D.C., in 1989, one of my friends said in a joking manner: "Hey Walt, are there any black people in Nebraska, I mean besides the football team?"

At the time I didn't really know because I had never met a black person from Nebraska. In the past, I'd heard of African Americans from Omaha, but black Nebraskans did not register.

So my first day in Lincoln, I looked for Lincoln's black community. When I asked for its location, I was told, "Well there is no black community as such . . . there used to be a black section, but that was years ago."

Lincoln was described as the picture of integration. A city that had purged itself of the prejudice, racism and bigotry still plaguing other American cities.

Like a tourist in a new city, I thought this was really the "Good Life." So in August 1989, my wife and I moved here for what we thought would be an unpolluted, hate-free, equal-opportunity environment.

Then one morning, in the classified section of The Lincoln Star, there it was, a two-line advertisement recruiting members for the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.

I was angry and hurt at once. I reasoned that this was someone's idea of a sick joke. My rationalizations



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were murdered when the ad was reprinted along with a feature story about the recruiter.

During the next few days the paper published letters to the editor saying it was insensitive to minority group members in Lincoln. All of the letter writers received notes printed on Klan stationery. The notes said "Caught your letter in the paper, isn't it interesting how easy it is to get your address anytime we want to?"

I found nothing interesting about how intelligent one had to be to look up a name and address in the city directory or telephone book. What I was interested in was the history of organized racism and prejudice in the city.

While perusing old newspaper clippings, I found what almost explained the story and advertisement, and why my classmate and the people who protested the story had their painful experiences.

According to a Lincoln Star editorial, in the 1920s an estimated 50,000 Nebraska men were Klansmen, with 5,000 in Lincoln alone. A cross was even burned on the State Capitol grounds in 1924.

As late as 1976, the Klan was active in Omaha, demonstrating against the integration of public sites and busing.

I asked older people in the community about the recent rash of terror letters. Many told me that these warnings are the regular results of speaking out against something you don't like about Nebraska, especially if you happen to be a minority. Such notes and threats have been received by schoolteachers, community activists, university professors and college administrators, as well as a few state senators. To get one all you have to do is have the courage to speak up about injustice and racism.

The next time I saw my classmate, she was a little better, but I could still see that apprehensive look in her eyes. We talked a bit before I was able to get her to smile. Then I told her what I had learned about the silent terror she had gone through. I told her about similar incidents. Sometimes when you know you're not the only one, it helps. I guess there is strength in numbers.

While I do not intend to treat this silent form of terror as something light, I am not surprised at it because racism and its organized hatred has been around as long as I can remember. Most minority groups have learned to expect some form of racism.

Back in 1926, John Moffatt Mecklin, in his book "The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind," said that the public is drawn to hate groups because of "ancient prejudices, classical hatreds and ingrained social habits." He said the disease had long been present in the social organism and needed only for the weakened social tissue to become malignant.

So when a student who just happens to be African American gets hate mail at a Middle American university, it's just the last symptom that this cancer is spreading and the nation is infected. This covert racism also indicated that the body of America the Beautiful is in urgent need of medical attention before it dies of the terminal illnesses of misunderstanding, hate, mistrust and racism.

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