

# School groups urge passage of drug bill

By Tabitha Hiner  
Senior Reporter

The Judiciary Committee hearing room could have been a pep rally Friday as two Hastings school groups performed before the committee and adults voiced their concerns about the dangers of drugs.



Wearing red T-shirts that read "Longfellow S.T.O.P. Team," nine Longfellow Elementary School members of Students Together Offer Prevention presented a skit and one

member later urged the committee to pass LB217.

The bill, introduced by Sen. Carol Pirsch of Omaha, would increase sentences to the next higher penalty classification for anyone convicted of possessing or distributing narcotics or other illegal drugs in areas frequented by children. LB217 was combined with LB451 and LB742 in the hearing.

A Hastings Junior High School group performed a rap song they created to urge the passing of LB217 in front of about 125 onlookers.

Karen Wilson of Parent Resources Information Drug Education Omaha supported all three bills, but suggested ways in which they could be strength-

ened. As she displayed a jar filled with a green substance, Wilson said it represented one ounce of marijuana—the amount that a person would have to possess with an intent to distribute in order to be convicted under LB217.

Wilson argued that the jar, which represented about 100 joints, was "offensive," but the fine for it, a citation and \$100 for the first offense, was "the equivalence of a traffic fine."

Sen. Jerry Chizek of Omaha said drugs created a "three-headed problem."

While the enforcement aspect of drug possession and distribution was being discussed, Chizek said, education and treatment also needed to be

addressed. Wilson said she liked the implications of LB742, a bill introduced by Pirsch and Sen. Lowell Johnson of North Bend that would prohibit the delivery of a controlled substance to minors, but wanted to strengthen it to include provisions to help prevent all minors under the age of 21 from using "gateway" drugs, which are substances that lead to the use of other drugs.

LB451, which was introduced by Pirsch and would change the penalties for marijuana possession, is "still fairly wimpy" compared to other state and federal laws, Wilson said, but it is a step in the right direction.

The bill would make persons guilty of a second offense of possessing

marijuana weighing up to one ounce attend a course that would tell of the effects of the misuse of drugs.

Although one Lincolnite, Kirk Hemphill, opposed LB217 because he said it was already illegal to sell drugs to minors, the other opponents focused on LB451.

Matthew Miller, a member of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln NORML/Hemp chapter, cited studies to back his claims that marijuana doesn't cause harm to a person using the drug. Studies have found no link between marijuana use and lower response levels, he said.

The committee took no action on the bills.

# Tractor lab to close if business continues to lag

By Todd Neeley  
Staff Reporter

Unless business picks up at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Tractor Testing Lab by September 1992 when its contract expires, it will be closed, a UNL official said.

Louis Leviticus, supervisor of the lab, said the five-year contract signed in 1987 with Equipment Manufacturer Institute in Chicago provided that as long as the lab remained efficient it could stay open.

Last year, the lab, which is the only independent tractor tester in the nation, tested only five tractors, he said.

Unless the lab tests 10 tractors a year, it isn't possible for the lab to "make a profit or stay open," he said.

“ Labor costs in this country are still very high. Companies are going where it is cheaper to market and manufacture, and where they can get more incentives.

Leviticus  
supervisor of UNL's Tractor Testing Lab

A recently formed task force including two UNL professors will search for financial alternatives to keep the lab open, Leviticus said.

The lab, which opened in 1920, used to test up to 40 tractors a year just a few years ago, he said.

But there may be hope, he said, because this year the lab is scheduled to test 11 tractors.

Leviticus said that for UNL's lab to stay open, it is required by law to make a profit.

Funding comes from the money made by the lab from testing, he said.

It takes one or two weeks to test a tractor depending on its size. Companies pay lab fees that average about \$11,000, Leviticus said, and the fees have gone up over the years to match

the cost of living. Leviticus said the lab has explored the possibility of raising fees to break even, but "it isn't enough."

Profit has gone down in recent years, Leviticus said, because many American tractor manufacturers are building their tractors overseas to save expense.

"Labor costs in this country are still very high," he said. "Companies are going where it is cheaper to market and manufacture, and where they can get more incentives."

The lab has never received UNL or federal funds, Leviticus said.

"Financially there are far more important things at the university than maintaining this place," Leviticus said, but "it does serve a very good purpose."

# Islamic course to fill 'weak spot'

By Bill Stratbucker  
Staff Reporter

A "weak spot" in the UNL history department curriculum will be strengthened with a new course in Middle Eastern and Islamic history, said Jessica Coope, an assistant professor.

The new course, called History of Islam, will cover an area of the world that is sometimes neglected, Coope said.

The course is in the beginning stages of development and probably will be offered in the fall of 1992, Coope said.

"I think the way things are in the world, people really want it," she said.

"Cultural Islam is not a big specialty here; when I came it was one of

the areas I felt I could offer."

Lloyd Ambrosius, acting chair of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln history department, agreed that the class would be beneficial.

"The whole area of the modern Middle East is a weak spot at the University of Nebraska generally, not just history," he said.

In the past, he said, there has been a lack of expertise in the area of Islamic history.

Dane Kennedy, chief undergraduate history adviser, agreed.

"It's a glaring gap in the university; it's an embarrassment that we have so few (courses) that are on modern Middle East," he said.

He said the area is not given enough attention by many universities.

Coope said the course will cover

the birth of Mohammed, 590 A.D., to the present. History of the Islamic religion, social and political systems and the science and philosophy of the area before the year 1500 A.D. will be touched on. After 1500 A.D., the course will focus on the Islam confrontation with western Europe and then on the problems of modern-day fundamentalism.

Coope said the course is intended to be introductory. She said the material will be no different than studying any other history.

"I wouldn't expect a huge enrollment," Ambrosius said, "although it is certainly a course the students could benefit from."

But Kennedy said, "I'm sure there will be (a large enrollment). I hope there will; there certainly better."

# Racism Reagan's policies blamed for rising inequality

By Tabitha Hiner  
Senior Reporter

Although racial equality has improved overall in the last 30 years, the past 10 years have brought increased inequality, said Susan Welch, author of the new book, "Black Americans' Views of Racial Inequality: A Dream Deferred."

Welch, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln political science professor, said former President Reagan's policies for the "underclass" pushed equality for blacks backward.

Policies like ones that would help the underclass find employment are needed to put the races on a more equal footing, she said.

While the legal racism that existed in the 1950s and '60s gave blacks something tangible to fight against,

Welch said, current institutional racism is tougher to combat.

She said it is more difficult to fight "mass movement types of political strategies."

If problems like institutional racism are not confronted, Welch said, "we're going to pay the price," which could mean having cities that aren't safe for living.

She said another consequence could be the reduction of United States' competitiveness in world markets. If the United States doesn't take care of internal problems like racism, she said, it will fall behind its world competitors.

Welch said she and co-author Lee Sigelman, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Arizona, used surveys in the book to examine the ways in which

racial inequality is perceived and who people blame for the inequality.

Blacks and whites perceive inequality differently, she said.

"Most whites deny that racial discrimination occurs, whereas most blacks have experienced it," Welch said.

Another discovery, she said, was that blacks are more likely to blame discrimination on whites, while whites are more likely to blame blacks for not being motivated.

The one thing both blacks and whites seemed to agree on, Welch said, is that blacks haven't had the same opportunity for education as whites have had.

Welch said she and Sigelman started looking at surveys for their book in 1988. The book was released this month.

49th St., said that "whatever one does in a war takes away from a lot of domestic issues at home."

Instead of war, the United States should focus on alternatives to oil, eliminating inner-city poverty and violence and improving health care, he said.

"It is time to stop the insanity of war," he said, "for war is a barbaric, antiquated way of ending disputes."

Gangler also said the United States should show restraint toward all Arabs to ensure they are not discriminated against.

# Object

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even though it has already begun.

"People are so afraid to say anything (against the war) now," he said. "They don't want to look wrong."

Nell Eckersley, a UNL junior world studies major and a member of Early Warning!, said President Bush does not support the New World Order because he denies linkage of Palestinian issues to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Bush has refused all offers for peace because he wants to establish a permanent U.S. military base in Saudi Arabia, she said.

Eckersley also said many troops are economic recruits because racism, sexism and oppression leave few alternatives to joining the military.

Because of war involvement, the United States has lost world moral and economic leadership, she said, and is now "the biggest bully on the world block."

Rev. Daniel Gangler of the United Methodist Church, 2641 N.

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