

Same old song

ASUN candidates need new tunes

In 1990, 16.3 percent of University of Nebraska-Lincoln students voted in student government elections. In 1989, turnout was 11.7 percent; in 1988, 13.1 percent.

Ask typical students why they forfeited their votes, and they'll tell you they don't think the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska does much for them. When an organization doesn't do much, it doesn't matter who runs it, they'll say.

Apparently, no one has told that to this year's ASUN executive candidates. In the two debates so far this year, they have taken on just about every university issue, made the usual promises and left their audiences with the usual shaking heads. About the only issue the candidates haven't offered their advice on is the future of the Middle East.

One party has promised to effect change with an official student vote on the NU Board of Regents. Of course, that party's candidates didn't bother to say how they would get the official vote.

They forgot to mention that changing the voting structure of the regents would be a complicated process, requiring input from the board and approval from the Legislature and Nebraska voters. Even under the most favorable circumstances, there's no way next year's executives will have an official vote.

Candidates can make the vote a campaign issue, but it won't be a means to put other issues into effect. Not next year, at least.

Another party discussed the Nebraska Legislature as if state senators were just waiting for ASUN's word before passing bills. Granted, ASUN, through its Government Liaison Committee, can lobby senators and present a student point of view. But ASUN, despite some candidates' exhortations to the contrary, will not make state law.

Another party with executive candidates says the answer to all of UNL students' problems is to open up better "lines of communication." The party even has a clever acronym for its public relations plan.

Try something new. Every year, ASUN election groups promise better communication. Every year, they fail to realize that effective communication should not be a political issue. Poor communicators simply should not run for office.

Sorry, candidates. You can't singlehandedly raise faculty salaries, appropriate UNL's budget or change the way the regents vote. You can't tell students over and over again that you will help them. Leadership requires action.

Effective representation of UNL's students means initiating creative plans for ASUN, rather than reacting to administrative and legislative proposals and rehashing the rhetoric of past campaigns.

All of the parties have interesting, student-oriented ideas on their platforms this year. For example, all the parties have taken a stand on one group's idea to name a Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Unfortunately, such discussion so far has been drowned in a sea of unrealistic promises.

With nine days and several debates left before the elections, it's high time to get some of those issues into the open. And, of course, high time to start passing the balloons and Jolly Ranchers.

—E.F.P.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Americans must be informed

I am writing regarding the article about Mike Farrell's speech on human rights (DN, Feb. 28). The article told only of Mr. Farrell's position in the Persian Gulf war and did not do justice to the full scope of his presentation.

Mr. Farrell's support for human rights goes further than the gulf war. This was shown by his reaction to an announcement that President Bush had called for a cease-fire in the gulf war. Mr. Farrell's immediate response was "Thank God," but he pointed out that the issue he is concerned with is larger than this immediate conflict. He is concerned with human rights violations everywhere in the world.

The article also mentioned that people should fight censorship, but did not clearly connect this censorship with our government, which does not always present a complete story to the American people.

A clear example of the government suppressing information was shown by the Iran-Contra scandal. Mr. Farrell said that if the American

public had known of this, it would have insisted that the government stop these activities. He pointed out that the Iranians knew they were getting arms, and the Contras knew they were getting money, and asked why didn't the American public know all of this was happening.

The gulf war is simply a current example of the government carefully regulating the flow of information given to the American people. We need to realize that this sort of governmental censorship occurs on a regular basis, and that we should not blindly accept all of our government's activities. The American people have a right to know the reasons for the actions taken by our government. Americans should be given the reasons for our government's actions and then we may decide on our own whether or not to support these actions.

Greg Johnson
first year
College of Law



JANA PEDERSEN

Peace declared prematurely

President Bush declared peace in the Persian Gulf on Wednesday, but the Christmas lights in my neighborhood have yet to come down.

The lights went up long before Christmas, as a symbol of hope for world peace and goodwill toward others.

At a Lincoln woman's suggestion, the lights remained up as a symbol of hope that Iraqi troops would pull out of Kuwait by Bush's Jan. 15 deadline.

When that deadline passed, the lights were supposed to stay up until Iraqi troops pulled out of Kuwait.

Now they still shine nightly, and will continue to shine until the U.S. troops come home.

Ninety-four percent of Nebraskans, in an Omaha World-Herald poll, said they supported Bush's actions in the gulf. But I look at those Christmas lights and disagree.

Some of the U.S. troops, though far fewer than most of us imagined, won't be coming home, and that makes the war drag on in my mind, regardless of the latest news that Iraq will accept the allied peace plan.

Pictures of allied prisoners of war in Iraq flash across the television screen with reports that prisoner exchanges are at the top of the peace plan.

But another report tells that two British prisoners may have been killed in captivity, and no one is willing to speculate on how many others may have been killed or tortured. That alone is enough to make me question the war.

The now-freed citizens of Kuwait praise allied troops and speak in soft voices about their dead loved ones — those who dared to stand up to Iraqi troops.

No doubt, as the new American ambassador to Iraq put it Saturday, such things are "atrocious atrocities." But once this peace has settled down, I wonder what Baghdad will look like and if the destruction there is atrocious, too.

Whether the Iraqis' inhumane treatment of people in Kuwait is more atrocious than the allies' ceaseless barrage of less-than-surgical strikes



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has yet to be determined.

Iraq launched Scud missile attacks in desperation at civilian targets, but allied bombs hit civilian targets too. Both kinds of attacks drew blood.

Long-term disputes between Arabs and non-Arabs, between some Arabs and other Arabs weren't answered by this war either. In fact, Saudi Arabia now is under fire from some of its Arab neighbors for being too un-Arab. Some Arabs still are upset by post-World War I allied politics in the region and are angry with Saudi Arabia for siding with the allies.

To Americans, Iraq started the war when it invaded Kuwait. But in Iraqi eyes, the battle began at the end of World War I when allied forces failed to give Iraq a port on the Persian Gulf.

Sadly, U.S. government and military reports fail to offer both sides of

the story, so 94 percent support for Bush's actions shouldn't come as a surprise.

U.S. military censorship was at its highest during the Persian Gulf war, higher than at any other time in this century, leaving journalists scrambling to provide up-to-the-minute, accurate coverage of events, and leaving the American public more skeptical of the media than of the government reports.

The problem with 94 percent support is that the statistic alone fails to acknowledge that the American public might not yet be in a position to give its support. There is much left to be learned about the war that ended so mercifully soon.

When scholars argue that the war was just because it brought about the desired end — peace — it's important to remember that there is not yet peace in the region. Bombs may no longer rain down on Baghdad, but clashes between groups of Arabs in the area are far from ended. In some instances, the war may only have heightened tension.

When conservatives make fun of protesters who chanted, "No blood for oil," it's important to remember that blood was shed on both sides of the battle. Iraqi Scuds killed Israeli civilians and American soldiers. Allied "smart" bombs destroyed more than just buildings. Before allied troops leave the area, more blood surely will be shed accidentally.

When Americans point to the "easy" allied victory and boast, "Who will dare stand up to us now?" it's important to remember that World War I was called the war to end all wars. Yet World War I has been named by Iraqis and other Arab countries as one of the causes of the war we just ended.

And when my neighbors get the chance to take down their Christmas lights, it will be most important to remember why they were put up in the first place.

We've not yet found peace on earth or goodwill toward others.

Pedersen is a junior advertising major, a Daily Nebraskan associate news editor and a columnist.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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