

Environmental plan

Statewide recycling should be priority

Gov. Ben Nelson took a five-day, 22-stop tour last week to gather Nebraskans' opinions about environmental issues in the state.

Nelson said he would use that information to formulate an environmental agenda over the next few months. That agenda will outline his environmental priorities for the Nebraska Legislature's 1992 session.

To set the agenda, Nelson sponsored a series of community meetings throughout the state. He asked Nebraskans what environmental issues they thought were important.

He sought advice from community leaders and from fifth and sixth graders.

He also fished for trout.

During the community meetings, Nelson emphasized cooperation between state and local governments on environmental issues.

He also highlighted regulation of disposal of out-of-state waste as one issue he will raise when the Legislature convenes next spring.

But Nelson should not overlook other, more important environmental issues when setting his agenda.

At the top of the list should be a comprehensive, statewide recycling project.

When Nelson spoke at the University of Nebraska State Museum on Sept. 23, he agreed with an audience member that state government must take the lead in recycling efforts.

He suggested that state government demand that products be delivered in recyclable containers, regardless of added costs. He also emphasized increased public education to show that individual commitment to recycling is needed.

While those aspects of recycling are important, Nebraska also should seek to foster the growth of the recycling industry within the state.

Nebraskans can collect and sort cans, glass, plastic and paper until tubs overflow, but with few outlets to bring materials for recycling, collection loses its worth.

One recyclable product suffering from overcollection is newsprint. Because recycled newspapers have few uses, paper companies have accepted more used newsprint than they can handle.

And now that recycling has attained political significance, overcollection could hinder the marketability of other used products.

Nelson is correct in asserting the need for demand of recycled products. Without consumer demand for such products, recycling itself is ineffectual.

But a state recycling plan could go beyond that.

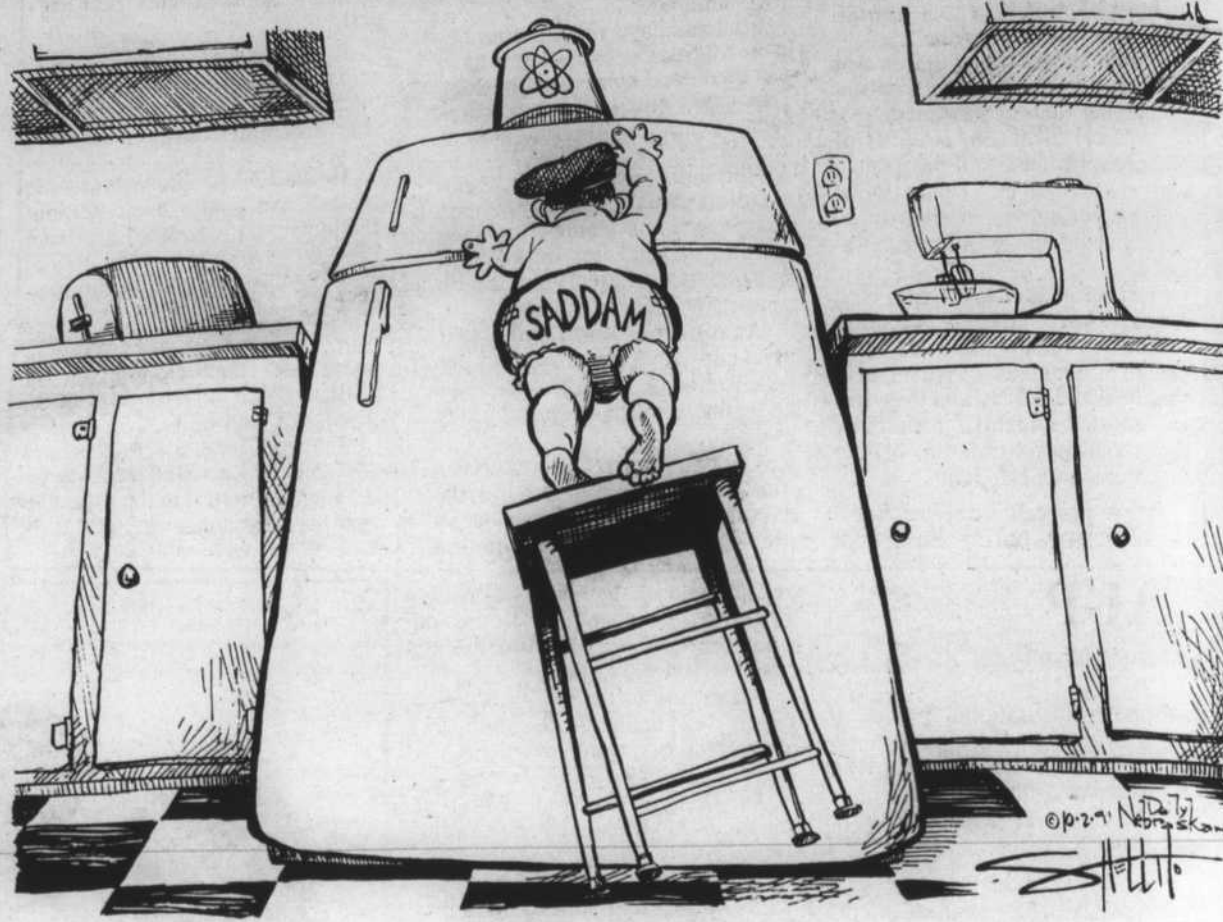
It could set up projects to develop new recycled products and recycling centers. It could grant aid to new recycling companies and to businesses that develop products made of recycled materials. It could finance the distribution of collection canisters and curbside pick-up of recyclables for programs within Nebraska cities and towns. It could sponsor incentives to spur Nebraskans to recycle.

Regardless of Nelson's insistence that individuals commit themselves to such efforts, little of that can be accomplished strictly on a volunteer basis.

Nelson was quick to point out the added costs of leaving environmental programs up to future generations.

On that note, Nelson should be quick to realize the intelligence of investing in a comprehensive recycling plan today, instead of forcing fifth- and sixth-graders to pick up the tab tomorrow.

—J.P.



CHUCK GREEN

Earth has priority over stars

The heavens can wait.

During the past several months, members of Congress and lobbying groups have pushed to increase spending on America's space program.

One of NASA's top priorities is a permanent space station orbiting Earth, which has become the centerpiece of the space program for the coming decade. Another is sending astronauts to the surface of Mars and returning them safely to Earth.

Last week, House-Senate negotiators agreed to provide \$2 billion for the proposed space station for the coming fiscal year, all but guaranteeing the defeat of efforts to cut the project's budget.

Opponents of the \$40 billion station tried to kill the project earlier this year, citing its tremendous expense and the need for other scientific initiatives whose funding would suffer if the space station were approved.

Both projects are fascinating. It's wonderful that human beings have evolved to such a technological degree that traveling to other planets or living permanently in orbit around the Earth is possible.

It's also unbelievable that we've become so ignorant in our quest for making the future the present.

The space station has been on the drawing board since 1984, and the research and development already has cost \$5 billion. And that's without any construction.

Instead of spending so much money, time and creativity trying to get off this planet, why not try to save it? After all, our great-great-grandchildren can always find another world to ruin.

But only if they have a healthy one to leave.

Incredibly, we have the ability to travel around the solar system, planting flags here and there and sending probes to tell us the surface temperature of Jupiter's moons, but we still can't figure out how to rid this planet



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of territorial disputes that cause wars.

We can spend billions of dollars sending up communications satellites to complete a phone call to the other side of the world in a few seconds, but when it comes to working out social problems, nobody wants to talk.

We can study the sun until our eyes melt, but no one breaks much of a sweat to figure out how to derive enough energy from it to stop raping the earth of its quickly disappearing resources.

We try hard to figure out ways to preserve food for month-long flights to Mars, but we turn our heads when the subject of feeding the world's starving population emerges. We can design radiation-proof shelters for astronauts to live and work on, both in orbit and on another planet's surface, but nobody seems to care about homeless people living on this country's streets, facing the cold of winter with a torn coat and no blanket.

The pricetag of the NASA projects

is enormous. The pricetag of saving various aspects of human culture is not so large.

Imagine the prospect of pumping \$40 billion or so into AIDS and cancer research. Or maybe \$10 billion into resurrecting America's inner-cities, giving their inhabitants much-needed pride to solve existing problems and prevent future ones.

For the same \$40 billion, America's education system could become the finest in the world. Better education would end most, if not all, of this country's social problems, and would provide the brainpower to make health hardships a bad memory.

For a fraction of that budget, America's homeless millions could have roofs over their heads and three meals a day. So could every other hungry person on earth.

The environment. Solar energy. Preservation of cultures. The list is as endless as the farthest reaches of space.

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But when humans die, so does romance.

Our vast library of technological knowledge will not go away. Neither will the stars. When we're ready for that step, we'll undoubtedly take it. But to do so before we've accomplished all we can at home is ridiculous and unacceptable.

Children leave home only when they're mature enough to handle it. The "children" of this planet haven't grown up yet. Not even close.

When we do, the stars will be waiting for us. They, like technology, won't go away.

But without a healthy starting point, the stars will remain distant points of light.

So will the chance for long-term human success. And survival.

Green is a senior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan's assistant sports editor and a columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Weather may toughen Huskers

I am writing in response to the column by Nick Hytrek, ("Unless demands are met, NU to have 1 fewer fan," DN, Sept. 24) concerning his list of demands before returning to the ranks of being a Cornhusker fan.

The Washington game was one of a long line of frustrating games for Nebraska in the last few years. It seems somewhat strange to me that Nebraska's decline seems to have started right about the time it started practicing indoors. I will admit that Nebraska hasn't been a team with a very aggressive passing game, but I fail to see the logic of practicing indoors when Nebraska's weather can be rather blustery, to say the least. I do give Keithen McCant credit. He can throw the ball with some degree of accuracy, but it just seems that when the wind is either against the Huskers or somewhat blustery, they really don't have the confidence to throw the ball.

Another point concerning the indoor practice facility: It also appears

that Nebraska's conditioning has changed upon going indoors. In the pre-indoor practice era, it seemed as though Nebraska was tougher when the temperature dropped than it is now. Just look at the last few big home games, for example — and I don't mean Utah State. The Colorado and Oklahoma games last season, for instance. The games were following true to Nebraska standards until late in the game, when the temperature began to drop. Then, things just seemed to fall apart both offensively and defensively, just like last Saturday's game against Washington.

I would like to add one more item to Hytrek's list of demands. Let's get back to the good ol' days of smash-mouth Nebraska football and practice outside in the elements and toughen the team up.

Chris Shipwash
sophomore
broadcasting

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