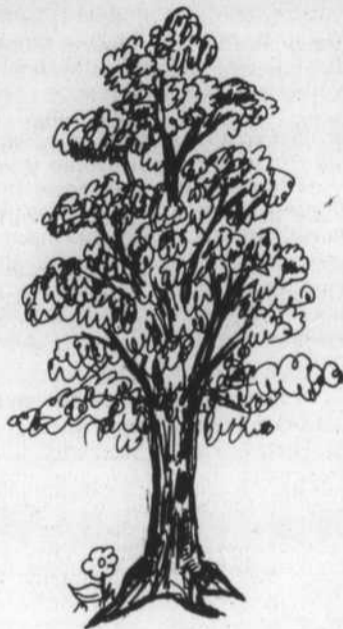


Time to plant

Environmentalism needs action, not hype

Almost two years ago, President Bush announced his "America the Beautiful program," under which volunteers were to plant 1 billion trees a year for the next decade. So far, it has been nothing but a beautiful public relations opportunity.



Lisa Pytlík/DN

Not a single tree has been planted. The National Tree Trust, the foundation that is to oversee the program, proposed a budget of more than \$1 million for salaries, fringe benefits, travel and office expenses. Grants to tree-planting groups were to amount to just \$350,000 under the budget proposal submitted to a House committee.

Some of the blame for the lack of results must go to Congress. Last year it only approved \$20 million for the program; Bush requested \$175 million.

But if the proposal submitted to Congress is any indication, much of the \$175 million would not have gone toward planting trees.

The tree-planting embarrassment is symbolic of the administration's larger failure on environmental issues, which has consisted of more opportunistic posing than sound policy.

—E.F.P.

ASUN regresses

Supporting ROTC creates setback

Once again the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska senate has proved that it's a good thing it has no binding power.

Otherwise its vote Wednesday night in support of keeping the ROTC program on campus could have been a setback to the efforts of gay and lesbian students to end discrimination.

As it is, however, the Academic Senate — at whom the ASUN vote was directed — can and should dismiss the resolution that calls for the faculty body to soften its stance against discrimination by the military.

Defense Department policy bars gays and lesbians from service in the armed forces. Gay and lesbian students are not allowed to participate in ROTC for that reason.

Enough has been said about that antiquated and discriminatory policy. It doesn't need to be repeated.

The Academic Senate last year took a progressive stance against the Defense Department, by calling for the chancellor to renegotiate the ROTC contract with the university if the policy is not changed by 1993.

Wednesday night ASUN slapped the Defense Department on the wrist for its policy but asked the Academic Senate to revoke the part of the resolution that calls for renegotiation of the contract.

Several senators, trying to shield their consciences with their constituents, argued that they were standing up for the rights of students with their vote to accept discrimination.

If the senators were really concerned with such altruistic goals, they would have voted down the resolution. Now the Academic Senate has no choice but to disregard ASUN's action.

—E.F.P.

What others think

Money answer to every North question

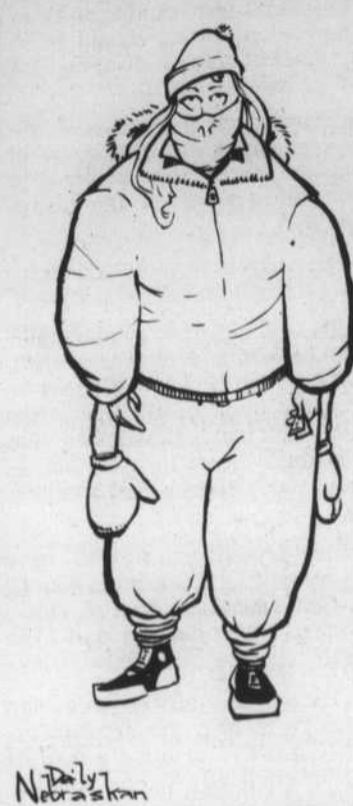
In an amazing turnabout, Lt. Col. Oliver North, point man for the Iran-contra initiative, decided to blow the whistle on Ronald Reagan in his startling new book "Under Fire."

In the final analysis, one must wonder why Oliver North didn't come forward sooner if he felt as personally betrayed by Ronald Reagan as he claims. He testified to Congress under immunity; his testimony could not have been used against him. So

why did North choose to dutifully protect his president, wait five years and then lob this bombshell right back in the Great Obfuscator's face? As those hardcovers start disappearing from the shelves at a rate Kitty Kelley would be proud of, we'll bet Oliver North could give us several million reasons why — in small, unmarked bills.

— The Minnesota Daily University of Minnesota

THE PRE-COLORADO GAME PREPARATIONS OF THREE UNL STUDENTS:



Daily Nebraskan

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CHRIS POTTER

Fear of nuclear power illogical

Despite scientific, public and international outcry, the U.S. government continues to pursue a reckless energy policy that can end only in disaster. Research funding for alternative fuel sources has been cut by half over the last decade.

If this country is to provide itself with a clean and sustained energy supply, Congress and the president should resume substantial funding of wind, solar and hydrodynamic research. Above all, they must resume and expand funding for nuclear research.

The United States burns fossil fuels to provide more than 70 percent of its electrical energy. Its factories and automobiles choke the environment by belching up each year millions of tons of sulphur oxides, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons and soot.

Worse yet, the heavy dependence on foreign oil constrains U.S. foreign policy. Oil-rich Mideast countries hold policy-makers hostage to endemic religious and political strife. Though its solidarity has been shattered temporarily, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries may reunite and induce another energy crisis.

A combination of media irresponsibility, environmental group pressure and public ignorance has dealt a near critical blow to the most viable energy option available.

Nuclear power might have developed into a decidedly safe technology with continued funding and decisive political leadership. Instead it languishes today near extinction.

Much of the ill will against nuclear power in the United States began in 1979 when the Three Mile Island reactor overheated and ejected a dose of radioactive gas into the atmosphere. Despite the fact that the amount of radiation was small and the reactor's safety containment design actually worked, the media scared the public witless. Since then, public support for nuclear power has evaporated.

Signed staff editorials represent the official policy of the Fall 1991 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are: Jana Pedersen, editor; Eric Pfanner, editorial page editor; Diane Brayton, managing editor; Walter Gholson, columnist; Paul



In lieu of sound debate over the relative merits of nuclear power, the public has succumbed to an irrational and paranoid fear of anything nuclear.

Testing revealed that the average radiation exposure to people near Three Mile Island was only around 8 millirems. Tanning lamp visitors get more.

Nuclear power critics felt themselves vindicated when in 1986 a far more serious incident took place at Chernobyl in the Soviet Union. Rather than merely overheating, that reactor actually experienced a meltdown.

Because the plant did not have the safety containment structure that Three Mile Island and all U.S. plants have, the radiation threat was acute. Exposure estimates for people near Chernobyl range into the hundreds of rems — around 10,000 times more than Three Mile Island.

But Chernobyl is hardly a vindication of the anti-nuclear lobby. It is a severe indictment of poor design, shoddy workmanship and lax operation procedures.

In lieu of sound debate over the relative merits of nuclear power, the public has succumbed to an irrational and paranoid fear of anything nu-

clear. Many erroneously associate nuclear power with nuclear weapons, unaware that a nuclear warhead is a totally different piece of engineering.

Others cite the radiation danger as a modern equivalent of medieval demonic spirits. The mere mention of radiation, regardless of its dosage, is sufficient to scare off otherwise intelligent energy consumers.

Radiation in high doses is definitely dangerous. Although nobody died at Three Mile Island, 31 have died at Chernobyl. Those deaths appear inordinately sinister because they were due to radiation.

But fossil fuels have been far more dangerous. In the period from 1951 to 1970, nearly 7,000 people died in coal-mining accidents alone. Not a single person died in U.S. nuclear power plant accidents.

Since Three Mile Island, no new nuclear plants have been built in this country. But even with decreased governmental research funding, nuclear engineers have designed a number of safer and cleaner reactors. Gas-cooled and passive reactors, for example, improve enormously on the basic design in use today.

Environmentalists charge that radioactive waste makes nuclear power unacceptable. But advanced breeder reactors recycle their waste back into fuel. Fusion reactors, though now technically unfeasible, may one day with sufficient research funding operate with no radioactive waste whatsoever.

Even ardent proponents of solar and wind energy admit that these options are currently economically unfeasible. With adequate funding they may one day be. In the meantime, nuclear power is the safest way to reduce our foreign oil dependency and protect the environment simultaneously.

Potter is a senior physics, philosophy, math and history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Domeier, copy desk chief; Brian Shellito, cartoonist; Jeremy Fitzpatrick, senior reporter.

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