

'Gag rule' remains

Bush should have saved veto this time

House Speaker Thomas Foley spoke too soon. On Tuesday, the Washington Democrat predicted that the House of Representatives would, for the first time, override a President Bush veto.

He said the House would muster the votes to lift Bush's ban on abortion counseling at federally financed family planning clinics.

Unfortunately, Foley's estimate was off by a dozen votes. The House failed again. Bush is now 24-0 on vetoes.

While the president's legislative record may be perfect, his most recent veto and the House's failure to override lead to a less-than-perfect record on social issues.

Bush's ban on abortion counseling has been called a "gag rule" because it prevents pregnant women from receiving information on a full range of options.

Bush tried to argue that it isn't really a gag rule. Doctors can still discuss "complete medical information about her condition" with a pregnant woman, he said.

While the issue here is really freedom of speech and the patient-doctor relationship, politics has twisted the issue from a medical one to a moral one, with abortion at the center.

The Supreme Court determined in 1973 that abortion is legal. That is the law of the land. As long as abortion is legal in the United States — for better or for worse — it is an option for pregnant women.

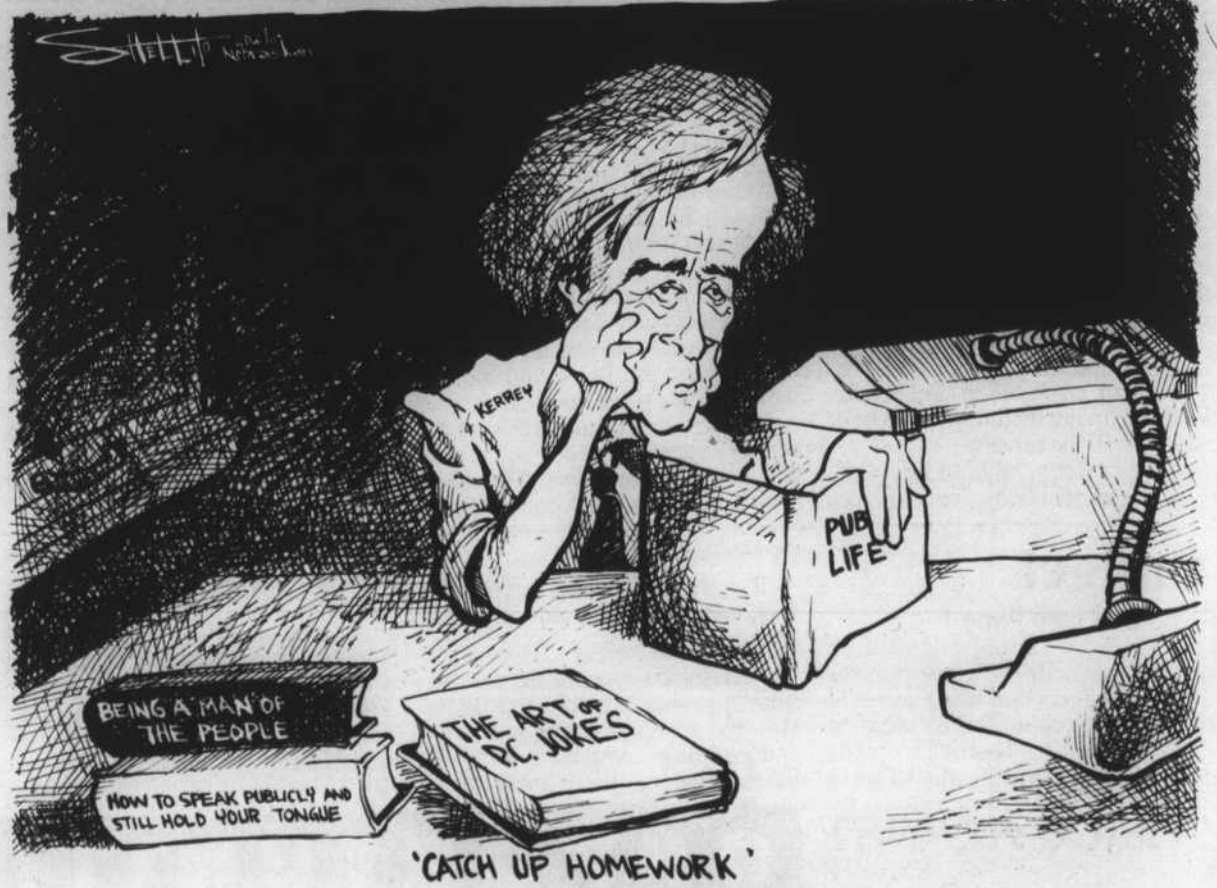
By blocking the dissemination of information about abortion, the government blocks the truth. Regardless of whether federally financed doctors tell clients about abortion, abortion exists. Even if the doctor, the patient and the government detest it as an option.

The danger in the ban is that it affects different segments of the population in different ways. Many women who use federal clinics are from low-income backgrounds. Unlike their middle class and wealthy counterparts, they may not be aware of the choices.

By banning abortion counseling, the government pretends that this option doesn't exist.

Counseling is not the same thing as advocacy. There is an even larger difference between telling a woman about an abortion and performing one. The issue must not be confused. Bush's veto, and the House's failure to override, threaten to do just that.

—E.F.P.



PAUL DOMEIER

Cartoonist should look at facts

Not many people know this, but an ancestor of Garry Trudeau, the creator of "Doonesbury," was a propagandist in France before the Revolution. The Jacobins accused him of covering up the economic crisis in the government of Louis XVI.

Actually, I have no idea whether that's true. If readers believed it, though, they next could make the simple assumption that the Trudeau family has a history of playing around with facts to get across an opinion.

Then I, of course, would be guilty of the same tinkering with facts to criticize Trudeau.

It frightens me that a lot of people who would agree with that criticism wouldn't mind my fiddling with facts. The ends justify the means if the ends are acceptable.

Wrong. If I cannot reach my conclusion by looking at the facts, my conclusion isn't worth anything.

Trudeau's recent conclusions, or his suggested conclusions, are that Dan Quayle may have tried to buy cocaine while a senator and that if he didn't, at least he was investigated and the investigation covered up.

His conclusions twist the facts, especially the part about the cover-up. The non-publicizing of a non-issue is not a cover-up.

"Doonesbury" has been suspended by more than 20 newspapers, including The Omaha World-Herald, not because Trudeau's taking shots at the Republican vice president, but because he is harping on a refuted allegation. That fiddles around with the ethical framework of journalism.

The important issue isn't politics, it's the truth.

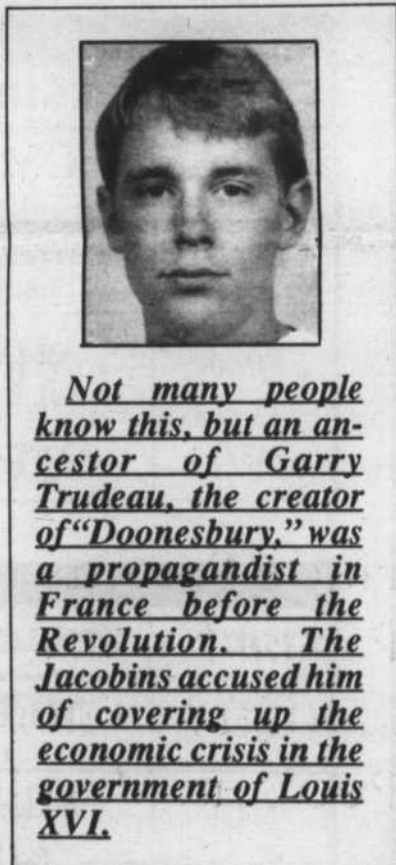
After 200 years, Americans have grown complacent with the First Amendment. We know it is supposed to protect the expression of unpopular ideas, but we've forgotten what those unpopular ideas are.

They have little to do with the current First Amendment debates over perverse photographs and Luther Campbell's cussing on stage in Florida.

The important unpopular ideas challenge the status quo. When propaganda is the basis for government and society, we need unpopular ideas. Any ideas presented to challenge the status quo must be based on fact.

This forms the marketplace of ideas, from which we can recreate our government and our society. False facts are counterfeit products in the marketplace of ideas.

Still, readers have demanded that The World-Herald run "Doonesbury" and have asked, "Let us decide what's



Not many people know this, but an ancestor of Garry Trudeau, the creator of "Doonesbury," was a propagandist in France before the Revolution. The Jacobins accused him of covering up the economic crisis in the government of Louis XVI.

fact and fiction." How ridiculous. That would be like jury members saying, "Let us hear allegations by a discredited source, and solely on the basis of that information we'll decide whether the defendant is guilty."

People don't seem to realize what is at issue when we take the marketplace for granted. Our country is ignoring too many instances in which fiction is included or facts omitted to advance a point.

Twisting of facts has hit institutional levels in New York. A commission created to study diversity in history in the state's public-school curriculum has suggested that the curriculum be changed to emphasize the importance of women and minorities.

The commission's majority won't admit it, but the commission minority — generally, its historians — says that emphasizing importance means exaggerating importance.

If the suggestions are adopted, the children of New York will be subject to a historical quota system: A woman mentioned for every man mentioned, with blacks and American Indians thrown in at the "proper" proportions.

Nurturing the idea of ethnic identity has been determined to be more important than historical accuracy.

Diversity in history now means truth and fiction.

That is dangerous. The Soviet Union offers plenty of evidence about what happens when the facts come from the ideas instead of the ideas from the facts.

For 70 years, Soviet "historians" have been touting the Russian Revolution. Communist revolution was inevitable, beneficial and perfect, despite evidence to the contrary.

The expectation was that, in time, the facts would come around to meet the ideas. That didn't happen.

The invented Soviet identity has collapsed, and the Soviet people have no history.

They'll be able to rebuild their history, and their identity, but it will take a long time and be painful. I'm confident that this time, their base will be the facts and not Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The biggest fact is that they've been lied to for 70 years.

And anyone who believes that the Quayle drug investigation has been a cover-up has been lied to.

Trudeau is good at it. The strips so far haven't included material worth a lawsuit. Trudeau has danced along the libel line often enough that he knows how to smear without slandering.

Yet he may have gotten his point across, trying to create a public mindset that says every administration official has a well-hidden file of dirt. Sooner or later, the facts will show that this is not true, and certainly not limited to the administration. But what will the cost be until then?

All of this because of one of Trudeau's biases. He claims he is a satirist, not a journalist, and therefore is permitted to do so.

But lately Trudeau has hinted that his satire might really be fact, clouding the line between satire and journalism. When Trudeau does that, he must follow the rules.

One rule says that the biases of journalists are wild beasts to be caged and killed, not pets to be fed and played with. As for Trudeau, discussing disproved attacks on a man you normally portray as invisible with a feather for a brain fits into the category of playing with a bias.

He's also playing around with libel, with the First Amendment, with his readers, with journalism, with the marketplace of ideas.

Trudeau is kicking around the truth. I don't like that game.

Domeier is a senior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan copy desk chief and a columnist.

Affirmative action policy not favoring all minorities

Walter Gholson ("Colleges should remove blinders," DN, Nov. 19) dismisses the concern that affirmative action policies may result in lowered hiring standards and argues that the main reason for affirmative action is "to provide equal opportunities for those who have been locked out of mainstream education for centuries." Gholson goes on to develop an amusing metaphor of ducks and ponds but I would suggest that he is himself ducking the issue and misstating the purpose of affirmative action, which is to provide equal opportunities for equally qualified people.

It is true that for years, academic hiring discriminated not only against blacks but against Jews, Roman Catholics and other groups. But in trying to correct this injustice, affirmative action guidelines have privileged certain minority groups and ignored others. The consequence is that while many departments are anxious to hire more blacks or women, say, there is seldom any talk about seeking better representation of orientals, Indians from

India, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, Southerners from impoverished backgrounds, fundamentalist or Catholic Christians, conservative Republicans or celibates.

Affirmative action may indeed result in lowered standards, but a more serious problem is its favoring of certain high-profile groups at the expense of others. The "dirty little secret" about the crusade for diversity and pluralism is that the crusaders have defined those words very narrowly and then gone on to exhibit the intemperance and bigotry so often found in crusaders of the past.

It would be much better to junk the whole idea and hire people according to their individual qualifications and abilities. This is the best way to show the individuals themselves genuine respect — and it is also the best way to achieve an authentic intellectual diversity.

R.D. Stock
professor
English

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its

employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents.

Editorial columns represent the opinion of the author.

The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the regents, who established the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper.

According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its students.