

Welfare lab rats

Poor need education, not less money

Try to add one and two and come up empty-handed. It's a pretty tough equation.

But for Wisconsin residents who receive government aid to raise their children, it soon will be possible to do just that.

Wisconsin has proposed, and the Bush Administration has endorsed, a plan aimed at reducing spending on welfare. President Bush said he was pleased to encourage Wisconsin and other states to become "laboratories" for welfare reform.

Under the Wisconsin plan, a poor woman who has a child will receive the usual amount of Aid to Families with Dependent Children. If she has another child, her benefits will increase only by half. For a third child, there is no increase in benefits.

The theory behind the plan is that poor women have babies to get more welfare money.

Yet, when Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson was asked to give evidence to support that assumption, he replied that there was none.

"... (B)ut there is no evidence to the contrary either," he said.

So, the plan apparently was based on no evidence whatsoever. That doesn't seem to be a sound way to make policy.

The plan has a number of other problems, too.

It does take a step away from a welfare Catch-22 by allowing working participants to keep the first \$200 and one-half of other earnings each month. Previously, participants only could keep the first \$30 and one-sixth or one-third of earned income.

Proponents say the change will allow more recipients to work — or have "personal responsibility," in the words of Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan. But these proponents fail to acknowledge that the cost of child care for working participants is high, perhaps higher than monthly benefits and part-time work will allow.

The plan also sends the unsettling, barbaric message that, while all poor children are unwanted, some are more unwanted than others.

Instead of trying to reduce welfare spending in such an after-the-fact manner, Wisconsin officials should go for the heart of the problem among the poor: lack of information about birth control, combined with no inexpensive or readily available means of contraception. Once those problems are addressed, officials can focus on secondary problems by providing inexpensive and educational child care and job training for the poor.

Wisconsin's reforms, which will be tested over a 5-year period, aren't the only ones being considered. President Bush said he wanted to encourage all states to try new ideas where welfare was concerned.

More care should be taken in other states where reforms are being considered.

After all, the poor children affected by such experiments deserve better treatment than mere laboratory rats.

Clean air act picks on minority

I want you to stop whatever you're doing and think seriously about the basic flaw of democracy. That flaw is: the majority rules.

But that's a good thing, you say? I know, you've been socialized to think so. But now I want you to really think about it for yourself, not just rerun the propaganda that has already been put into your mind and that glosses over the reality.

This time the minority targeted to suffer is smokers. The Nebraska Clean Environment Act wants to tax smokers another 25 cents per pack, and no one else, in order to allegedly "clean up Nebraska's environment." Personally, I think the true purpose is to create a few high-paying office jobs.

I asked some UNL students who are in support of the Nebraska Clean Environment Act to give me one good reason why smokers alone should bear the burden for something that they think will benefit all. I was told that "smoker health care is a burden on society," "anyone can get cancer from secondhand smoke," "smokers litter and they should have to pay to clean Nebraska up!"

Hey, back up, there! Geriatric health care is a "burden on society." Health

care for people in many categories is. And it hasn't been proven that secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, but I don't want to argue that one. Even if it were true, so what? YOU choose which section of public areas you will patronize, YOU choose with whom you will associate. Some smokers litter, that is true. But so does most everyone. So why doesn't "most everyone" pay for this "clean-up"?

I asked for good reasons why smokers alone should pay the price. I got excuses. If you think you know a good reason, please say so. But no more trashy excuses, OK?

I think I know the reason, and it's not a good one: Non-smokers (the majority) want smokers (the minority) to pay everyone's bills. That is morally wrong, but this is a democracy, so it is quite possible that it will happen, unless a wave of conscience strikes Nebraska voters.

Look out — what goes around does come around, and you, yourself, may be part of a selected minority one day.

Fran Thompson
senior
sociology

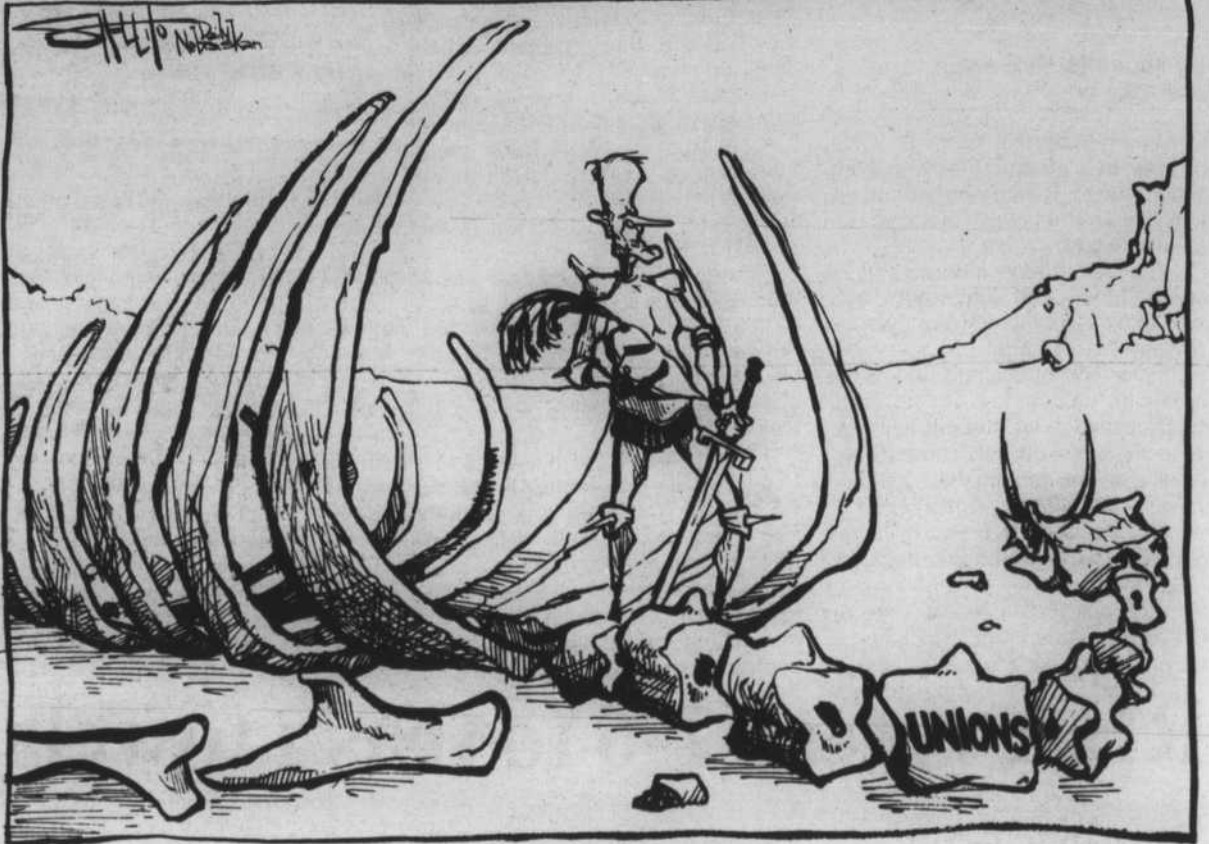
EDITORIAL POLICY

Staff editorials represent the official policy of the Spring 1992 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are: Jana Pedersen, editor; Alan Phelps, opinion page editor; Kara Wells, managing editor; Roger Price, wire editor; Wendy Navratil, copy

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

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

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON



ALAN PHELPS

Faceless sources tarnish media

I can't live with myself anymore. I'm tired of the lies, the scandal, Macaulay Culkin, the deceit, etc. So I'm going to tell all.

I wasn't surprised when Bill Clinton's various scandals came up or when Jerry Brown had to defend himself last week against faceless accusers who appeared on an ABC news program. The whole thing had been planned weeks ago by that most evil of entities — the media.

We of the media have been running this campaign from the beginning. Sure, it all looks good to the people back home, but here at this end of the keyboard, we're laughing at America, the flag and bald eagles.

Ha ha ha, Washington Monument! You see, the run for the presidency hasn't become a farce for nothing. There is a method to this madness.

In short, Sam Donaldson wants the White House. And what Sam wants, Sam gets.

Donaldson, the Romulan who shows up on all kinds of ABC news productions, has had his eye on America's highest elected office for years. Day after day, he drudged about Washington, digging up stories, working his way up the ladder.

All along, his goals were set high. He began an olive oil business that was really a front for an underground news organization and began building it into the giant you see today. Across Washington, Sam has made friends by doing favors for people. Of course, the trick is, everyone owes him favors now.

No one seriously expects Brown to win the nomination, barring some far-out scenario. But Donaldson wanted to make sure. He lashed around, searching for a charge that would be easy to stick on the former California governor.

Wild drug parties seemed to be the ticket. Sam rounded up a few of the guys hanging around the office, such as Ted Koppel and Peter Jennings, and, after rubbing their faces off, taped the segment that would appear on last Thursday's broadcast.

Many Californians were quick to come to Brown's aid. B.T. Collins, a Republican Assemblyman, said Brown never had parties.

"He was the worst damper on a party there was," Collins said. "He was just a prude. . . . he didn't even like cigarette smoke around him."

I'm sure Brown thanked B.T. for those kind words. Of course, if it's true, there probably weren't a whole lot of the wild parties that Sam contends were going on at the Moonbeam mansion.

Wild Californian: Moonman, great



"Elvis, to be featured on an upcoming U.S. postage stamp, evidently was 'fattened up, like a farm cow' by Clinton, as the Arkansas governor evaded the draft, had numerous extramarital affairs, participated in the government's UFO cover-up and killed JFK..."

bash! Here, have a drag, hee hee hee hee.

Brown: What? (gasp) What is that you are smoking? Some new kind of cigarette? No, thanks, but I prefer to be High On Life.

Wild Southerner: C'mon, man, it's OK if you don't inhale . . .

Sam Donaldson: But Jerrmaster, everyone's doing it . . . You want to be a member of our peer group, don't you?

Brown: Everyone out, or I'm calling CHiPs — that's right — both Erik Estrada AND the white guy!

Donaldson's not about to stop yet. He has several more little news items up his sleeve. His plans come through our fax machine almost daily. Let's look at today's message:

TO: THE DAILY NEBRASKAN
FROM: S.D.
RE: My rise to supreme executive power.

Dear Media Under My Control:
I'm going to make you a deal you cannot refuse. Bill Clinton's looking strong after that New York win, but I found this exclusive story for your front page:

"MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Democratic presidential hopeful Bill Clinton today was accused by several reliable faceless entities as being the mastermind behind Elvis' bloating.

"Elvis, to be featured on an upcoming U.S. postage stamp, evidently was 'fattened up, like a farm cow' by Clinton, as the Arkansas governor evaded the draft, had numerous extramarital affairs, participated in the government's UFO cover-up and killed JFK . . ."

Thus far, the media have been all too willing to participate in Donaldson's little power play. While some of the issues that have been raised are relevant to the campaign, others — especially the latest attack against Brown — border on the ridiculous.

ABC News, under the thumb of Sam, allowed anonymous sources to discredit Brown years after the events they allege happened. While anonymity at times must be protected, this does not seem to be such a case.

The accusers, who ABC said were former security guards at the Brown estate when Jerry was still governor, have nothing to fear from Brown. Their jobs no longer depend on him. If they are telling the truth, Brown wouldn't be able to touch them.

The people at ABC must believe the guards are being truthful, or they wouldn't have broadcast the accusations. But Brown wasn't the only party to lose credibility from the report.

It's a mite dangerous for me to disagree with the ABC decision. Sam has eyes and ears everywhere these days.

I once received a vicious phone call from Sam. There hadn't been enough candidate-bashing on the opinion page, he told me. He warned of a cloaked Romulan warbird standing near my house and gave me some "inside information" about Paul Tsongas and Barbara Bush.

Donaldson doesn't worry a whole lot about college newspapers in Nebraska. He probably thinks that one call turned me around, and then he forgot about the DN.

So I'm going to chart my own course through these troubled election-year waters. I'm free. It feels good to have that moral weight off my back. I don't have to bash candidates! I can write flowery columns about good things like butterflies.

And then when the election rolls around, I can choose between a couple upstanding nominees, and everyone will have all the cotton candy they want and no one will ever get fat!

On the other hand, maybe Sam wouldn't be such a bad president.

Phelps is a sophomore news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan opinion page editor and a columnist.