

SEAN GREEN

Law, order redeem Legislature

Last week, I had to spend a day at the Legislature to cover debate on a bill.

Only a small portion of Nebraska's residents ever get to attend a legislative session. With that in mind, here are some observations that might provide some insight into what actually goes on in the halls of our state's power:

The general legislative sessions are in the legislative chamber, a room the size of a gymnasium minus the bleachers and cheerleaders.

On Tuesday, most of the legislators were there, but not all at the same time. They ran in and out of the chamber all day, as if they were trying to hold down two jobs at once.

There were Veterans of Foreign Wars volunteers wearing red jackets and guarding the entrances. They were friendly, elderly men who made sure nobody got onto the floor without a pass, including me.

Pages also were there. Pages are young men and women who sit at the front of the room and wait to take messages to the legislators or run errands, or do whatever.

Pages all wear blue vests over nice clothing and always seem to be smiling, the way only young Republicans can smile.

Most of the debate Tuesday afternoon was about a bill that would have raised the price of vehicle registration.

At least, I think that's what the debate was about. The legislators somehow managed to work every topic imaginable into the discussion, and it was surprising to learn how many things are related to cars.

For example, there's the issue of vanity or personalized license plates and how much people should pay for them. Decisions, decisions, decisions.

And I should point out that the debate was lukewarm, at best. Compared to a presidential debate, or a debate over whose turn it is to do the dishes or take out the trash, it wasn't very interesting at all.

In fact, there seemed to be such a strong lack of disagreement that I had trouble telling who was supporting the vehicle registration bill and who was against it.

One senator stood up and talked awhile as the other senators shuffled papers and talked with each other and the pages poured coffee.

Then that senator lit his pipe and another senator stood up and began talking.



Pages all wear blue vests over nice clothing and always seem to be smiling, the way only young Republicans can smile.

There were a few times when the senators actually exchanged words over the microphones, but they always used a very respectable tone and they never raised their voices.

Part of the debate was about using the extra registration fees to make driver's licenses more difficult to falsify.

I sat up and paid attention at that point, having some vague recollection of once hearing about someone who had been rumored to have a fake driver's license.

About every hour, the legislators stopped debate and took time to introduce visitors.

These visitors were sitting up in the balcony. There was a group of high school students from somewhere, some elementary students from somewhere else, their teachers and maybe a bus driver or two.

The senators all applauded to let the guests know how glad they were to have these students and teachers and bus drivers visiting the legislative chamber.

Then they went back to debating how much they were going to charge these visitors and the rest of Nebraska's residents to drive cars.

Of course, legislators don't spend all of their time engaged in floor debate. One other task they have is to attend committee hearings.

Some of these hearings are interesting and thought-provoking. Others are often hard to distinguish from a church service.

That really isn't fair to church, because most church services only

last an hour and these hearings can last decades, or so it seems.

People from all walks of life, including college professors and administrators, come to these committee hearings to ask for money or to testify for legislation or to give their expertise.

These hearings, while often tedious, seem to be the place where most of the real work gets done in the Legislature.

People on both sides of an issue have a chance to talk to the legislators, and legislators get to ask questions and shuffle papers and smoke pipes.

Aside from committee hearings, there are all kinds of other activities going on in the Capitol. Thousands of things, actually.

I don't know what these activities are exactly. I doubt anyone does. But whatever they're doing involves paperwork by the tons and bureaucrats running hither and yon in the dark corridors.

I remember going on a tour through those corridors when I was a kid. My fellow fourth-graders and I were amazed and delighted to find naked women painted all over the floor of the Capitol.

Democracy in action didn't really impress most of us, but this state-sanctioned celebration of nakedness was even better than our trip to the Sheldon Art Gallery in third grade.

I still don't know who those women on the floor of the Capitol are supposed to be. Truth, Justice and Miss February maybe, or, to be more in tune with American politics, Fawn Hall or Gennifer Flowers.

If the women are supposed to be Truth, Justice and Liberty, it is ironic that they are on the floor, where senators, lobbyists, journalists and other citizens trod all over them each day.

Maybe the architect had a sense of irony and planned it that way.

Somehow, the state is run from these floors and boring meetings and unheated debates.

Democracy in action, or inaction, isn't as flashy as MTV or as fun to watch as... well, about anything I can name.

But a little more than 100 years ago, the only laws in this state were made by those who had guns, and I'll take pipe smoke to gun smoke almost every time.

Green is a senior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and a columnist.



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Fires show risk, waste of paper towels

I'm writing this letter in response to the article on recent residence hall fires ("Police suspect arson in Residence Hall fires," DN, April 10). According to the article, several of the fires were bathroom trash-can fires. Not to excuse the alleged arsonist(s), but paper towels are the real culprit here.

As a student who has lived in the residence halls for four years, I have seen the unnecessary risk of fire and waste that paper towels represent. Bathroom trash containers overflowing with paper towels and other squandered resources of the planet are a daily sight in every bathroom of the residence halls. If the paper towels

would not have been present, it's a safe bet that several of these fires could have been prevented.

Not only are paper towels an unnecessary risk, but in tight budget times, they are like fat that needs trimming: \$30,000 is wasted annually in the residence halls on paper towels. The residence hall students know this and that is why, in the recent RHA elections, students voted favorably on a survey that asked if they would be willing to give up paper towels. The survey statement went on to say that the money saved would be used in the development of an expanded recycling effort and to keep housing rates down. I hope the

administration will take this into account when deciding whether or not to allocate money for paper towels in the 1992/93 fiscal housing budget.

Students want lower housing rates and they want a full-scale recycling effort. Is giving up paper towels so high a price? Before 1985, residence hall students used cloth towels. More-over, paper towels are non-recyclable. Let's conserve financial and natural resources and use cloth towels as we once did. Support recycling and reduce waste in the university budget!

Jeff Riggert
senior
biological sciences

Hunting is unjustified killing

This letter is sent out to Arnold Remington and to anyone else who seems to care. However, it was Arnold Remington who seemed confident enough to think that what he was saying in his Friday DN letter ("Hunting not 'subliminal hatred,'" April 10) had any points of relevancy to it.

I am not an animal rights activist, at least not a radical one, and I am also not a hunter.

Hunting may not be a result of "subliminal hatred," but I think it is rather obvious to the rest of the world that it is cold-blooded killing.

No matter how wrong it is to eat meat, or for medical tests to be forced upon unsuspecting animals or for farmers and slaughterers to kill and process pigs and cows, etc. certain aspects of our present society require that these things happen.

prosper, another must die. You said that, Arnold Remington, not me. I think that if the human race can create video phones, heat-seeking missiles, nuclear bombs and send humans into outer space, then we could also figure out a way to survive without hunting. Only a primitive man would be able to support that argument.

You said in your article that if you were just mean and evil why wouldn't you just massacre a bunch of mice in the comfort of your own home? I don't know. I assume you said that because you are inferring that when you hunt you are suddenly a sportsman. That seems to be the second-most-popular argument for hunters these days. I don't see any sport in shooting a defenseless animal from a blind side, or any side for that matter. Let me see you go out into the woods naked with a knife and try to chase

down a prairie dog, or bow-hunting after a frightened whitetail, not one asleep by a forest brook.

The most popular excuse for hunting is that it controls the population explosion. You said that the information in your letter came from "scientific wildlife population dynamics equations." I was blind to any scientific evidence in that article.

I am not trying to change your views, only challenge your opinion. Killing is simply not moral if it isn't justified, and it is very difficult to justify! Pardon me, Arnold, but I'm going to kill a hunter, I hear they make a good jerky.

Kevin Eubanks
junior
English and German

Attention Night Owls: Your Time is Worth Money!

UNL Residence Halls are expanding their desk hours and responsibilities. We need reliable students to staff these positions.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provide information and resources to students
- Monitor access to building
- Enforce escort policy
- Register guests
- Assist with appropriate responses to emergency situations
- Notify other staff of situations which require their attention
- Maintain log of problems and unusual situations
- Answer office phones
- Perform administrative duties
- Attend regularly scheduled meetings
- Participate in pre-service training sessions
- Perform other duties as assigned

BENEFITS:

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- Work around your class schedule
- Be part of a progressive team
- Provide a valuable student service

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Application Deadline: April 22, 1992