

OPINION

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EDITORIAL

Overpriced books

Bookstores may be 'stealing' from students

Something stinks.

Every semester, students have to fork out big bucks for their textbooks. But their knowledge of textbook prices goes nowhere beyond the annual half-hour excursion to buy books, and there is little they can do about the prices but refuse to buy the book and risk the consequences in class.

That leaves little opportunity for students to question who sets the prices or how they are determined.

This spring, though, University of Nebraska-Lincoln history professor James Moore was struck by the price the bookstores were charging for the used copies of a book he helped write. While holding a student's copy of the book, "In Our Times: America After World War II," Moore noticed the used price was higher than the book's original new price.

His questions led to new questions that every student and professor should be interested in.

The list price of the book, according to a recent list of prices and Moore's royalty statement, is around \$18. But the book, bought new, is selling at the two bookstores for around \$30. Used, the book costs more than \$22. That doesn't add up.

Whispers of a textbook price conspiracy are an old joke on almost every campus, but Moore's case lends some credibility to questions about the pricing policies. The culprit, however, is hard to pinpoint.

Students point at the professors who point at the bookstores that point at some vague corporate entity. Ultimately, University Bookstore general manager Larry Behrends said the store used price lists from individual publishers to set its prices. The current suggested retail price of "In Our Times" is \$25.80.

If those kind of numbers hold true for every book for every class on this campus, someone is making a lot of money by legally stealing from students.

Students deserve to know the full extent of this situation and the whole story surrounding textbook prices. Until they do, no one will know the truth.

Senseless shootings

Citizens should take a stand, end apathy

On Wednesday in Tampa, Fla., a man walked into an office building cafe, shouted, "This is what you get for firing me!" and opened fire.

The man killed three people and wounded two more. He later apparently took his own life in a nearby park.

What happened in Tampa was a great tragedy. But it will not stir the nation. It will not be the lead story on the national evening news or in any but the local newspapers.

Why? Because shootings have become so commonplace in the United States that we hardly even notice them anymore.

In Lincoln last year we avoided a similar incident when Arthur McElroy walked into Ferguson Hall with a loaded gun and the apparent intention to use it. We dodged a bullet that day, but countless others around the United States haven't been so fortunate.

What will be done about the Florida shooting? Nothing.

How many people will have to be killed before Americans decide they have had enough? How long will we sit idly by and do nothing while people die?

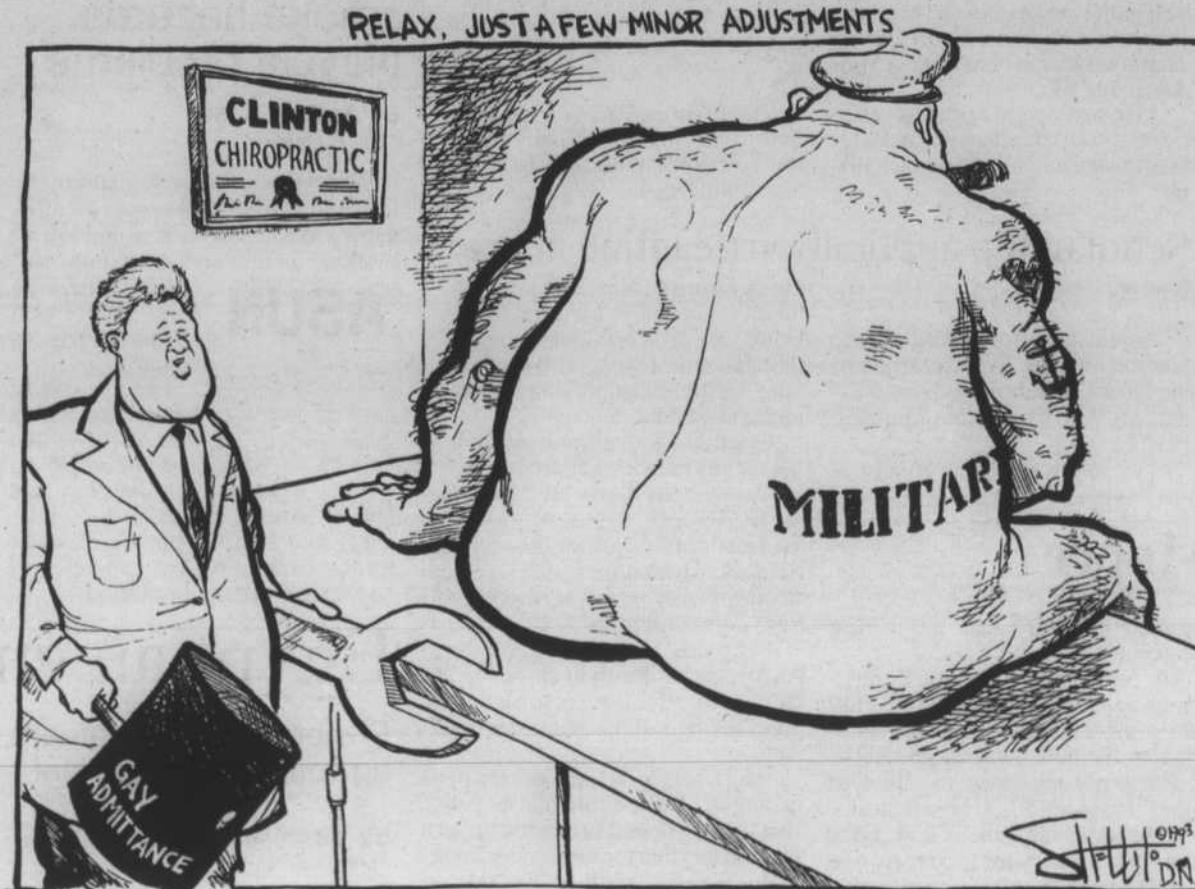
The answer to that question is up to the citizens of this country. Whether we will have stricter gun legislation to stop these senseless killings is completely up to us.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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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 or reject all material submitted. Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted. Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



BILJANA OBRADOVIC

Year brings traditions, changes

We can't seem to get away from new things: the new year, new beginnings, new hopes for peace in Yugoslavia, new presidents, new administrations, new semester, new students, new schedules, new classes and new plans to exercise.

It is always exciting to start with a fresh slate, with renewed strengths — planted seeds to be reaped at a later time. But the new year doesn't begin on Jan. 1 for all students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Many international students I talked to said their new year's celebrations were quite different.

In Serbia, the new year is celebrated according to the Gregorian calendar — which is older than the Julian calendar of the western world — beginning Jan. 14.

My family celebrates New Year's Day with a special cornbread baked with a ducat, a coin, baked somewhere inside. My mother divides the cornbread into areas to represent family members. When the bread is eaten, whoever finds the ducat in their section is predicted to have a happy and prosperous year.

Vesna Kilibarda, of Montenegro, says gypsies there go from door to door wishing happy Serbian new year and asking for cookies.

In Tamil Nadu, in southern India, T. Sethupathy says that the cycle of years used there is 60 years long and each year has a name. Jan. 14 is their New Year's Day also, called "Pongal" — a four-day vacation. Everyone celebrates the fact that rice was harvested and sold, money was received and a feast eaten. Manish Devgan, from Punjab in northern India, says that they call it "Baisakhi," or harvest of wheat.

Moses Mwale, of Zambia, says that they celebrate with traditional dances signifying the safe passage into another year. Women and men are painted with different colors of clay. Inacio Maposse, of Mozambique, says people sacrifice a goat in his



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Gaza Province, and they drink beer made out of cashew fruit called "shikanju" in their native language Shangan.

Peng He and Shaolin Bi say their aunt Ping Lu of China told them the Chinese lunar New Year began this past weekend on Jan. 23, but that it changes every year depending on the observation of the moon. This year is the year of the rooster. There are 12 animals in a cycle. The new year is also called Spring Festival.

Corina Calvo of Argentina says that it was summer there on New Year's Day and everyone is on vacation at the seaside.

Aiman Alaraj of Palestine says that the new year is a reminder of another year of occupation and hope for independence. Palestinians celebrate on a spiritual level, although they have turkey stuffed with rice, meat, pine nuts, walnuts and salad, plus baklava for sweets.

Ofer Asif of Israel says that the new year is called Rosh Hashanah — or the head of the year — blessing for the year. It was observed on Sept. 28 last year. They eat apples with honey

so the year will be sweet. The rabbi blows a special reindeer horn signifying the beginning of the new year.

Susanne Robert and Michael Grant tell me that in Ireland and Scotland, people drink a lot to celebrate and they sing the old Scottish song "Auld Lang Syne" written by Robert Burns in the old dialect of Ayrshire. It is good luck if, on the first day of the year, a dark man is the first person to cross the threshold of your house with a lump of coal. In London, people get drunk on Picadilly Circus and fall in the fountain of Eros.

Kanichi Saito, of Japan, tells me that they eat a special kind of bread called ozoni or mochi. They write their new resolutions in calligraphy.

I am hopeful that in this new year some positive changes will be made in the United States with the new administration. The U.S. Congress has been considering a bill that would make graduate-student stipends exempt from federal taxes. The bill would be retroactive — those students who have been paying taxes since 1986 could file to have the money returned.

The bill, HR4418, has been introduced by Tom Lewis of Florida. I do not have the right to vote in this country. I cannot help make it into law.

My country, Yugoslavia, has been split into so many separate entities. Our elections were in December. I wish that I could have voted, but there were no absentee votes.

I have never been able to vote. I came to the United States four and a half years ago to become a writer, to freely express my views. Four years ago a fellow graduate student found out I had never voted and she took me to the polling place and showed me the process of American democracy. It was one of the greatest moments in my life. I watched her do it.

Obradovic is a graduate student in creative writing-poetry and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Prayers

I don't think that Judaism is superior to Christianity, that Hinduism is superior to Christianity or that atheism is superior to Christianity. All religions or non-religions are equal. If ASUN wants prayer at graduation, that's fine. But to make it fair, they must make time for every religion. Of course, given the time frame of graduation, this is impossible.

So what can we do? The answer is

simple: have no benediction at all. ASUN and others have suggested allowing students to decide whether or not to have benediction, but there is a flaw in their suggestion: The Christian majority will easily get its way in any kind of a vote. But hey, Ronald Schmidt says that offending a few people for the happiness of the majority isn't wrong. But he's dead wrong.

America is based on allowing everyone the freedom to be. That doesn't mean letting me do whatever I want at home, but then force me to become part of the majority elsewhere. It means that I must be respected wherever I am for being who I am.

I think that members of ASUN and others who support prayer at graduation should get off their high horses and realize how wrong they are for trying to impose the Christian religion onto others.

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